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# JACOB VALMONT, MANAGER.

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BY

GEO. A. WALL

AND

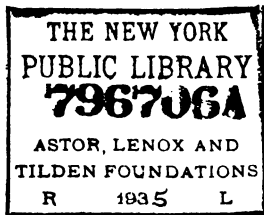
GEO. B. HECKEL.

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Valmont.

**Bruce Transfer**

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# JACOB VALMONT, MANAGER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### IN ADAIRSVILLE.

"The Honorable Charles Buchanan now has the floor. He will present his views of the question in debate, and they will repay attention."

The committee-man resumed his seat, and a tall man stepped forward to the front of the platform bowing in acknowledgment of the applause that greeted his appearance.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "we are gathered here this evening to discuss informally the question of right and wrong in party principles—a question that is of the gravest importance to each and every one of us; for as we decide this question, so will we vote, and upon our votes depend not only public, but private tranquillity and prosperity; not only the stability of our institutions at large, but the security of our lives, our fortunes, and our homes. It therefore behooves us to vote wisely. I shall now endeavor to show that the principles so ably defended by our esteemed fellow-citizen, Mr. Valmont, are in

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many ways dangerous." He then proceeded to answer forcibly and concisely his opponent's arguments.

The speaker addressed his audience from the band-stand in the public square of Adairsville.

Behind him were seated several of the village dignitaries, among them the previous speaker; and still farther back, the gleam of polished brass indicated the position of the band.

The light from four huge reflectors, placed at the corners of the platform, showed a large audience gathered beneath the overarching trees; for this public debate was a new departure in the political history of Adairsville, and had excited exceptional interest in young and old, men and women, throughout the county. They had come from far and near, and in the moon-lit roadways bordering on all sides this village park, stood a nondescript collection of vehicles, ranging all the way from the farmer's hay-wagon to the party-barge of the summer hotel. But while the country people pressed around the speaker's stand, the occupants of these pleasure-wagons, not being interested in local politics, remained in and around their conveyances, waiting for the music at the close of the speaking.

Mr. Buchanan at last reached the summing-up of his case. He said:

"Finally, my fellow-citizens, in recapitulation, I present to you a party that has promised little but performed much—a party that deals in action, not in protestation; in practical work, not

in elaborate theory; in broad moral principles, not in time-serving expedients. My opponent has asked me, 'What has my party done for the fair State of Vermont?' I answer, 'Everything.'"

A low murmur of applause ran from mouth to mouth; but at the same time, dissentient sounds of an ominous character came from many points in the crowd.

The speaker continued:

"There is not a nook hidden among her green hills, or nestling on her fertile plains, where the voice of the district schoolmaster is not heard, or where the hallowed music of the church bell does not sound.

"From the days when Ethan Allen, leading his sturdy mountaineers, knocked at the gates of Ticonderoga and summoned Oppression, in the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress, to surrender, down to this present moment, these principles have lived and wrought their God-given purpose in the lives of our sons and daughters. From a thousand factories, workshops, and schools; from the depths of the mine, and from the sunny upland, where the fertile soil breaks into bounteous harvests beneath the smile of heaven, a voice forever rises, in mighty, though unworded, protest against the arguments of my opponent.

"These arguments I have answered in detail. I have shown you——"

During the utterance of the last few sentences, applause had been frequent; but a persistent

minority in the crowd seemed determined to silence it, and at this point angry cries of "False!" "Lies!" "Come down!" arose from many points in the space around the platform, and a missile or two bounded harmlessly on the boards.

The speaker, pausing, poured himself a glass of water, drank it, and stood calmly waiting for the uproar to subside.

At the first lull in the tumult, he began again:

"I have shown you the utter falsity of his pretensions," and then, as if at a preconcerted signal, the disturbance broke out afresh with increased virulence, and a volley of missiles accompanied the cries.

Mr. Buchanan resolutely maintained his position, determined to continue his speech; but a catastrophe intervened. By chance, one of the flying missiles broke a lamp at the back of the platform. There was a flash, as the escaping oil caught fire, and, at the same moment, shrill shrieks of agony rang out above the cries of the crowd; for the blazing oil in falling had set fire to the clothing of a boy who had perched himself on one of the supports of the stand.

The uproar in the crowd was instantly hushed, and by a common impulse they surged around to the rear of the platform, where the boy lay writhing and screaming upon the grass. Here they hesitated, no one seeming to have presence of mind to know what should be done. But, fortunately for the child, the accident had been seen from the street. A young man leaped from one

of the party-wagons, cleared the low fence at a bound, and made straight for the spot, slipping off his coat as he ran. In a moment he had broken through the throng gathered about the child, and smothered the flames with the garment.

A cheer broke from the crowd, and at that moment a portly old gentleman pushed his way through the circle and joined the rescuer.

"Well done, my friend!" he said; "but the boy must be hurt, from the way he cries. He'd better be taken to my office over there, where we can see to dress his burns."

"Are you a doctor?" asked the young man.

"Dr. Wayne, at your service," answered the other.

"Dr. Wayne," the young man repeated to himself, as if the name struck him as familiar.

"My office is just across the square," the old gentleman continued; "there, where you see the light. Will you carry the child?"

"Yes," the young man responded, lifting the struggling boy in his arms. "Will you lead the way?"

"If you will go directly over, I will join you in a moment. My carriage is standing out here in the street, and I must take it home. Enter without knocking; I shall be with you immediately."

The crowd parted, and a score of volunteers went before the young man and his shrieking charge, eager to show the way. Dr. Wayne hurried to his carriage, in which a young lady was



anxiously awaiting his return. As he took his seat beside her, the girl exclaimed eagerly, "Oh, doctor; how the poor child cries! Isn't it terrible? Is he much hurt?"

"I don't know yet," the old man answered, as he gathered up the reins. "They are taking him to the office. I am afraid I can't see you home just now."

"Oh, don't think of me. I will drive Dolly to the stable, and wait for you on the veranda; shall I?"

"If you wish, May. I shall probably be through in a few minutes."

The crowd made way for them as they drove through the gate and in a moment drew up before the office door.

The girl took the carriage on around the house.

- Meanwhile the young man had reached the office, a small detached building standing beside the driveway that ran between it and the house. He found the door open and a servant awaiting him, and, following the latter, was ushered into an inner operating-room.

Here the servant took the boy, and, laying him on the operating-chair, began removing the scorched and burned clothing; and at that moment the young man perceived with astonishment that the servant was a Mongolian.

But while he watched the slender, brown fingers deftly doing their work, and wondered what chain of circumstances could have brought this specimen of the human race to an isolated, old-

fashioned New England village, so far away from friends and kindred and the Joss houses and tea gardens of the Celestial Empire, the outer door opened, a hurried step traversed the adjoining room, and Dr. Wayne appeared.

"You are here, eh, Chang?" said he to the Chinaman. "That's good. Now get me the cotton, the sweet oil, some bandages, and the morphine bottle. Tut, tut, my young man!" to the boy, who had never intermitted his cries; "how do you expect ever to be a soldier, if you cry like that?" Then, having adjusted his spectacles, he began to examine the burns, talking continually to take the child's mind off the pain. "Hello! It's Bobby Miller, isn't it? Why, Bobby, I hardly know you, when you make a face like that. Yes, I know it hurts, but it won't hurt long; and after it is done hurting you'll be ashamed of having cried like a girl."

By this time Chang had brought the required articles, and the doctor sent him to Mrs. Miller's house with the message that Bobby was all right, and would be brought home soon.

Then he went skillfully to work, still talking and asking so many questions that, between the ease brought by the soothing oil and the opiate, and the distraction of answering, Bobby forgot to cry, and was soon laughing through his tears at the funny speeches of the surgeon; and by the time the operation was finished, he was taken home, feeling but little the worse for the accident.

When the boy was gone, the doctor turned to

his companion, who was pacing up and down the room, nursing an injured hand.

"Now," said he, "how can I serve you? Is your hand burned?"

"Yes; it needs a little fixing, I guess," said the other, taking a seat on the chair and holding out his right hand. "You see this left sleeve caught fire, and in putting it out I burned myself.

"You did indeed burn yourself," said the doctor, bending over the outstretched hand. "The palm is much inflamed; but I think not seriously injured."

"I am glad of that, of course; but please get something on it to stop this infernal pain."

While the doctor busied himself over the hurt of this new patient, Chang entered, to say that a "barge" belonging to one of the hotels had stopped at the gate, and the people in it were inquiring for a Mr. Huntingford, who, they said, was in the doctor's office.

"That's my name," said the young man, "and I know their errand. I'm staying at the same hotel, and drove up here with the party. But doctor, I really don't feel like listening to their questions, and being jolted about in a drive of six or seven miles, with this pain in my hand. I think I will put up to-night in the hotel here. Won't you kindly send your servant to tell them to drive back without me, as I intend staying in the village?"

This the doctor did, and presently they heard the wagon roll away.

Now the old surgeon, practicing his art on Mr. Huntingford's hand, found an opportunity, which his investigating mind and the professional habit led him never to neglect, for a study of human hieroglyphics. In the steady blue eyes that followed his every motion he read honesty; the clear-cut, not unhandsome face, framed in light brown, wavy hair, was full of character; and the lines about the firm mouth, shaded by a tawny moustache, expressive of resolute purpose. From the face, the doctor's eyes wandered over the stalwart, well-developed form; and he thought to himself: "What a fine specimen of manhood he is; a lineal descendant of the sturdy old Saxons—cool-headed, steadfast, and brave. My friend, you are a man worth knowing well."

Huntingford, on the other hand, though not so skilled nor so experienced in the interpretation of face-signs, was also, in his own way, a student of character, and returned the doctor's scrutiny with interest.

He saw a clean-shaven face, seamed with such wrinkles as are born only of a generous and gentle heart; while the portly, well-clad figure betokened a man negligent neither of good living nor of good dressing. But in the doctor's manner and surroundings there were many things that puzzled the young man, things that struck him as totally discordant with his idea of the life and habits of a country physician: the presence of the Chinese servant, the doctor's manner, which evidenced familiarity with the usages

and amenities of city life, the tasteful luxury apparent even in this workshop, and the owner's conversation, which had that certain indefinable smoothness of inflection and easy flow that bespeak culture.

The more the young man studied his companion, the more anomalous did the latter appear to him, and at last his thoughts summed themselves up thus unsatisfactorily: "After all, old gentleman, you are a puzzle to me. You are probably not aware of the fact, and it might not interest you greatly if you were; but the fact remains. Why under the sun does a man of your evident ability and experience, with such breeding and culture, content himself with a paltry country practice—two-thirds charity and the rest slow pay—when he might be reaping wealth and fame in the city? Somehow, you seem above this business. Ah, well. Fate often amuses herself with trying to fit square pegs into round holes, and I don't pretend to comprehend all her ways. But, however and whyeveryou are here, you are certainly no ordinary man. It strikes me one might confide in you, and be sure of good counsel, sympathy, and sincerity, in return. And I have half a mind to try you."

"There," said the doctor, interrupting his reflections; "after we get this bandage pinned, I think you'll find yourself as good as new. There is some inflammation, but if you keep the hand quiet to-night, you ought to be ready to discard the swaddling-clothes by morning. How do you feel?"

"A little club-footed in my hand, of course, but otherwise about as usual."

"You are, at least, a satisfactory patient," the doctor returned, "and know how to make the best of bad circumstances."

"Spare compliments, doctor!" the young man cried, lifting his uninjured hand deprecatingly; "for I am already your debtor in more than one sense. By the way, I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to help yourself to the financial part of the settlement, for my cash pocket refuses to honor a draft from my left hand"—fumbling about in his vest pocket; "the moral balance I'll try to pay on demand."

The doctor stepped back, raising one hand in quick rejection, and a severe look came into his pleasant face, as he said, "Never mind that, at least for the present. You saved the boy's life. When you accept pay for your services, then maybe your right hand will be ready to do business. Besides, the regular physician, Doctor Fink, is not at home. I'm but an amateur, and do such things as this for the sake of practice."

This conceit seemed to please the speaker, and brought back the kindly expression to his wrinkled face.

"If you call yourself an amateur, what must be the skill of this Doctor Fink, the professional?" Mr. Huntingford exclaimed.

The old gentleman acknowledged the compliment with a pleased laugh that seemed to say, "You'll do! You'll do!"

"But I forget; there is a young friend of mine on the veranda, waiting for me."

"Don't let me detain you," Huntingford exclaimed, rising, hat in hand. "Perhaps I have already taken too much of your time?"

"Not at all, not at all!" the doctor returned. "And, now I think of it, probably the best thing you can do is to join us, for the present, anyway. These beautiful nights come seldom, even in the country, and they should be enjoyed."

"Nothing would please me more; but you see I am not quite presentable in this burned coat and this harness."

"As for that," the doctor interrupted, "your coat is merely scorched. That will not be seen; and the harness will not interfere with your enjoyment of the cool air, nor stand between you and the moonlight."

"Besides, the pain in my hand will tend to make me a very uninteresting companion," the young man added.

"Not quite so comfortable, then, as you tried to make me believe, is it?" and the doctor nodded his head and smiled, as if amused at having trapped his patient. "But," he added, laying a hand on Huntingford's shoulder, "do as you feel inclined to. For my part, knowing the accommodations that country hotels in general, and this one in particular, have to offer, I should put off my time of visiting it as long as possible." Whereupon the young man acknowledged that it was the fear of abusing the doctor's kindness that

had made him hesitate—and so, accepting the invitation, followed the old gentleman.

They left the office, and walking along the graveled drive, reached the front of the house. But, as they turned the corner, and the long range of the veranda came into view, Huntingford started, and an expression of surprise escaped him. At the farther end of the piazza sat a woman whose form was clearly outlined against the white moonlight beyond. This must be the friend of whom the doctor had spoken; and it was certainly no elderly person, but a young lady, as anyone could see from the subtle grace of the slender form bending toward them.

True, the doctor had spoken of “a young friend,” but Huntingford did not notice the qualifying word.

Yet, however much he might wish to avoid meeting any young lady in his present condition, it was now too late for retreat; so, mustering courage, he walked on beside the doctor. The young lady left her seat, and came forward to meet them.

“May, let me introduce the hero of the hour—Mr. Huntingford; my god-child, Miss Larned,” said the doctor, taking a step backward, his eyes twinkling merrily at Huntingford’s evident embarrassment.

But the young man’s surprise was natural enough; for, when the doctor spoke the girl’s name, a light dawned upon him. Though he then met Miss Larned for the first time, her name



had been familiar to his lips for months, in conversation with his business partners, and he had come into that neighborhood on an errand that intimately concerned her welfare. He now understood also why the doctor's name had seemed so familiar.

To add to his embarrassment, he found that none of his preconceived ideals of the young lady fitted the reality. He had never seen a face so beautiful; had never imagined anything like the liquid luster of the dark eyes that were raised to his.

He succeeded, however, by an effort, in recovering his equanimity sufficiently to respond to the young lady's greeting. Then they sat down, and the conversation naturally turned to the recent excitement in the park, the scene of which now lay in full view before them.

"I admire your presence of mind, Mr. Huntingford, and envy your promptness," said the doctor. "May and I saw the accident from the carriage; and before I was fairly started, you had saved the boy. Ah me, young limbs and a clear head, what can they not do?"

"It was nothing, doctor," the young man protested. "I acted on impulse."

"That is just it," the old gentleman returned. "Impulse—with the requisite head and heart to guide it—makes heroes of men. The ordinary man thinks twice before he acts; but the hero has done all his thinking long before the emergency arises. I don't blame men for being cowards; it

is natural to value one's own life and limb above those of another; but I do admire the hero."

"Please don't exaggerate a thing so trivial into an act of heroism! I should stop to think as long as anyone else in the face of actual danger," Huntingford protested.

"No," the doctor answered, "I am sure you would not; it is not in you to halt at a critical moment. But don't imagine I praise you for that. What becomes of judgment and reason when a man acts on mere impulse?" The doctor smiled quizzically, but Miss Larned took his remark seriously.

"But in such cases, if one stops to think, the chance for doing good passes," she said with animation, "and a life may be lost while one is calculating chances. Suppose Mr. Huntingford had stopped to think this evening, what would have become of that poor child? I should think one would value one's impulses more than one's judgment, if they help one to save life."

"But suppose," said the doctor gravely, "one has lost an arm or a leg in acting on impulse."

"Or singed a hand," suggested Huntingford, falling into the doctor's humor, and indicating his bandages.

The girl's look, as she turned to Mr. Huntingford, was full of sympathy. But she said, "I am very sure that you don't balance a burned hand against the child's life."

"Surely a man who has done his duty has

earned the right to grumble at the consequences," the doctor retorted.

Miss Larned would not be laughed out of her serious mood. "If I had saved a life," she answered thoughtfully, "I think I should feel prouder and happier than if I had conquered the whole world."

"That is placing a high value on life," responded the doctor, smiling; then becoming suddenly thoughtful he continued, "and yet, is it really so valuable? Nature, who is so wasteful of it, does not so regard it. After all, what is it we save men from when we save their lives? From a mystery that, sooner or later, we all must meet and solve; what matter a few days more or less?"

"Yet life is sweet to us all, doctor," said Huntingford. "There are few that would regard the nearness of that mystery with delight."

"Yes, we naturally dread the unknown; but the experience gained in the practice of my profession teaches us, I think, that this mystery, though awful, is not frightful. After a short struggle, a pang of parting, we slip away beyond the veil, into a region that, after the wearying turmoil and trouble of this life, will be full of rest and peace, whatever else we may find there. We are taken up by nature, whose wonders are spread about us here, and rocked to sleep on her cool, calm breast. Who can tell what new wonders she has in store for us? At least, if we may trust the words of those that have been brought back

to us from her very arms, she has no terrors there; but celestial radiance, harmony, and peace. As our teachers of the cloth say, 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding!' "

He stopped, and remained thoughtful for a few moments; then said lightly, "There is a whole sermon! You see Mr. Huntingford, age is garrulous, and I am a lecturer by profession."

But the young man was silent. The doctor's words had impressed him deeply; for they were the words of one drawing near to that mystery of which he spoke so tranquilly. Huntingford regarded the speaker with a feeling akin to reverence, as he thought, "How calmly this old man goes to meet his end. Nothing but the consciousness of a life well spent could give such trust, so deep a content."

The lights in the windows of the houses around the park went out one by one, and a night breeze sprang up, bearing to their ears a faint murmur of water pouring over a dam.

At last, Miss Larned, rising with a sigh of regret, said, "I fear I must be going."

"Very well, May, I'll see you home. But first I must arrange matters for my guest."

"Excuse me, doctor; I could not think of putting you to further trouble."

"That is all right; but I have an idea that I hope you will like; it is that you accept such accommodations as I can offer you, for this night at least. I am seldom so fortunate as to have visitors; but when they come, they are

not usually so anxious to leave as you seem to be."

The argument that followed resulted as the doctor wished. Chang was called and told to make Mr. Huntingford comfortable. The good-nights were said; and the doctor, after advising his guest to take a good rest, tucked Miss Larned's hand in among the wrinkles of his coat sleeve, and he and the young girl went away, arm in arm.

The young man watched the pair until they disappeared in the shadows of the trees along the road. His mood was serious; for the mission that had hitherto been to him merely a business errand, now bore a more personal aspect. By mere accident, almost at the beginning of his visit to the neighborhood he found himself the guest of the man who had been suggested to him as a possible adviser, and at the same time he had been thrown into the company of the young woman in whose behalf he was to work. "What a sweet, pretty girl, she is!" he thought. "My task will be pleasanter than I could have hoped, and a trifle dangerous too, perhaps, my boy. Ah, well, duty before all things, and after us the deluge!"

He turned away, and seeing Chang awaiting him on the threshold, followed the Chinaman into the house.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE HOLY ORDER.

After the accident, of which Bobby Miller and his rescuer were the innocent victims, there was no more speaking in the park. In some respects the mishap was a fortunate one, for the turbulent minority, suborned in advance, were determined to silence Mr. Buchanan at any cost, pushing resistance even to blows, if necessary; and, but for the broken lamp, there might have been bloodshed.

After the departure of the crowd which followed Mr. Huntingford and his charge to the doctor's office door, the two speakers found themselves standing, by chance, face to face. Mr. Buchanan turned to leave in silence, not daring to trust himself in speech while resentment burned so hotly within. The other, however, detained him with a touch on the arm, saying, "One moment, if you please, Mr. Buchanan."

A flush overspread the face of the latter, but he paused, and said inquiringly, "Well?"

"I trust that you will understand how deeply I regret the occurrences of this evening, and how gladly I would have averted them, had it been possible."

Mr. Buchanan looked the other straight in the eyes, and answered coldly, "I accept your assur-

ances, Mr. Valmont, as you intend them. I wish you a good-evening, sir;" and bowing punctiliously, he strode across the square to the hotel.

Soon afterward he was driving homeward, up the river road, cherishing in his heart no friendly feelings toward Mr. Valmont and Mr. Valmont's faction.

The latter gentleman stood for a moment in deep thought, and then bent his steps homeward.

It was little further than a stone's-throw to the house where Mr. Valmont lived with his step-daughter, Miss Larned. It stood in the midst of spacious grounds, near the intersection of the two streets that bounded the park on its north and west sides; a rambling, commodious frame structure, surrounded by a broad piazza, and bearing evidence, in its numerous wings and projections, of having been many times enlarged.

The grounds were filled with fine elms and maples, and between colonnades of giant tree-trunks, a broad graveled drive wound up to the veranda, and on past the side of the house to the barn, some distance in the rear.

The owner of this residence was an uncommon man; a man of great influence in the county, and one who, in spite of an ungenial manner, cold even to repulsion, commanded respect from all that knew him, and had become, through sheer force of character, without apparent effort, the most prominent man in the district. His voice, seldom heard, but always to the purpose, bore a weight equaled by no other in local affairs; and



He and the young girl went away arm in arm. Page 22.





Mr. Valmont's tacit indorsement of any proposed enterprise was regarded as almost a guarantee of success.

As he crossed the square, he looked a striking personage. Though little above the medium height and inclined to meagreness of flesh, there was something commanding in the massive, square-built frame, erect as an arrow, save for the bowed head. His features were equally striking; a somewhat spare face, cleanly shaven, of sallow complexion, and hard outlines; a high, narrow forehead, that when the hat was removed ran far back into the sparse iron-gray hair, worn somewhat short, and standing stiffly upright; a chin prominently angular; a mouth of unusually fine outlines, that but for a slight drop at the corners, and the excessive sharpness and firmness of its lines, would have been pronounced beautiful. The nose was also a good one, of that form to which the greatest nation of history has bequeathed its name. His eyes, deeply set under square brows, were peculiar in color, being neither brown nor black, blue nor gray, but partaking of the peculiar shade of each, under varying circumstances. Such eyes are not common, but they are sometimes seen, and when seen, are never forgotten. At this moment they glowed with the fire of a determination that boded ill to anyone or anything that should oppose the will of their owner. His thoughts were of Mr. Buchanan, whose manner at parting had jarred upon his sensibilities.

He was accustomed to have his statements received with respectful assent, and did not relish the suspicion that had been evident in the lawyer's words and looks. Even though the latter's implied distrust would have been justified by the facts, Mr. Valmont alone knew these, and he brooked but ill a suspicion involving his character, that the evidence did not justify. The truth is, that the interrupters of Mr. Buchanan's speech were certain rough characters from the mines of which Mr. Valmont was manager; and it was due to his prompting, through the medium of a certain Croitier, one of his foremen, that the interruption had been planned and executed. But so cautiously had the original suggestion been made that it would have been impossible to trace back to its author the final result. He had not calculated, however, upon the legal training of his victim, and it was startling to be caught thus morally red-handed. Besides, his motives had no personal reference to Mr. Buchanan, whose respect he would have preferred to retain; he had merely aimed at a seemingly spontaneous demonstration against the cause espoused by his opponent. Now, however, the issue having been raised, he felt that he would not hesitate to sacrifice the man with the cause.

Revolving these subjects calmly and judicially in his mind, he reached the veranda steps, and slowly mounted them. So deep was his absorption, that he did not perceive a venerable personage who, leaning on a staff, awaited him.

His reverie was broken by a low, musical voice, saying, "Peace be with you, Jacob ben Naphthali!"

Mr. Valmont, thus addressed, started in surprise; but, recognizing the speaker at once, glanced around to assure himself that there was no one else within hearing, and responded courteously, "And with you be peace, Rabbi Malachi!" Then he added, "I trust, reverend rabbi, that you have not been obliged to await me long. Had I expected your visit, I would have been present to receive you. Still, though unannounced, you are always welcome."

"Speak not of that, worthy son of Israel," the old man returned. "The evening is pleasant, and it has been good for me to be for a time alone. I heard you speaking as I passed by the common on my way hither, and could easily have informed you of my arrival; or I could have made my presence known, had I wished, to the Gentile woman who cares for your dwelling, but I wished it not. I have grave matters to communicate, that it will not be easy to place before you discreetly and without offense. So I have found it good to rest here alone and ponder the words I must utter before speaking them."

While the old man spoke the other studied his face, as if striving to read there his meaning. After a thoughtful pause, he said, "It is more than a year, good rabbi, since you visited me last. I have often expected you, hearing of your presence in some neighboring city, but you did not

come. The last word I had of you was from Cincinnati, and that was but a few days ago. Surely it must be an important errand that brings you in person from such a distance."

"It is an important errand, indeed, my son, and one that could not be performed by any other than a patriarch of our order. I have come, even as you say, from Cincinnati, to advise with you."

This information startled Mr. Valmont, and he resumed, with increased gravity of tone and manner:

"Patriarch of the West, you know that I esteem your counsels, your advice, and your friendship above anything else."

The venerable Hebrew, knitting his heavy white eyebrows, leaned upon his staff, and, fixing Valmont with his gaze, lowered his voice almost to a whisper as he said:

"This time it is not the voice of the Patriarch of the West that Jacob ben Naphthali shall hear, nor is it the voice of the friend that must speak to Jacob Valmont."

"Whence, then, comes the message I am to hear?" Mr. Valmont asked breathlessly. "Not from"—he paused, as if unwilling to finish the sentence.

Rabbi Malachi nodded his head solemnly.

"Then," said Mr. Valmont, "let us go to the library, where no inquisitive ear can overhear us." And, turning into the house, he led the way to a room upstairs, lighted a lamp and

motioned his visitor to an easy chair; then, drawing one for himself, he also sat down, and, repressing any sign of mental disturbance, awaited the message.

The old man sat for some minutes, leaning forward on his staff, without speaking.

Sitting thus, he appeared indeed a patriarch. A man of quite seventy years, slightly bowed, but of full figure, his snowy hair fell about his shoulders and mingled with the white beard that swept his knees. His features were decidedly Jewish, but of the Asiatic type, which the dark olive of his complexion emphasized, while his brown eyes added a peculiar gentleness to a very benevolent face. It was a face that women and children would have trusted; it was a form that might have ministered before the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Solomon.

After a time he raised his eyes, and fixing them not unkindly on the face of his friend, began:

“Jacob ben Naphthali is reaping high honors among the Gentiles!”

“Honors, Reverend Patriarch? Yes, they come and they go. To-day the dog licks the hand that feeds him, and to-morrow he bites it. But I am chaining these dogs to the treadmill, and snarl as they may, they shall tread the wheel to grind corn for the children of the house; and when the children are fed, the dogs shall be kicked into the street to prey on one another, according to their nature.”

“It is whispered among the Children of the

Promise that Jacob ben Naphthali has become Gentile among Gentiles, and that Jacob Valmont repudiates the Children of Israel," the old man continued slowly.

"If you mean by this to ask me whether I proclaim it from the house-tops that I am a Jew, answer you, no! If you mean to ask me if it is suspected among the tools I use that the hand that wields them is the hand of a despised son of Abraham, again I answer, no! Jehovah has given to his servant the face of a Gentile, that he may enter into the land of Canaan and spy it out for the Armies of the Lord; and he has prospered me.

The Patriarch proceeded: "It is murmured that the Levite of the North is ashamed of his kinsmen of the holy tribe; that his love has cooled and the fire of the altar has been quenched in his heart; that Jacob ben Naphthali, the Jew, is dead and Jacob Valmont, the Gentile, has usurped his place among the tents of Israel."

Valmont sprang to his feet, and opening wide his arms, cried:

"Patriarch of the West; Rabbi of the Holy Temple; Prince of the Palace in Jerusalem, hear me! Be he Jew or Gentile, he lies that misinformed you thus! I ashamed! My love cooled! The Hebrew dead in me! Listen to me! The Jew dies not! His enemies spring up like weeds in fallow ground; they fill the earth. The dogs and the children of dogs increase and multiply from one extremity of the world to the other; and the Jew

is one among many. They pursue him from land to land. They hunt him from the rivers of Arabia to the frozen steppes of Russia; from the plains of Tartary to the mountains of Spain; from the mountains of Spain to the burning sands of Africa. They pursue him from city to city, through the length and breadth of Europe, till at last, in this young land, which has not yet tasted the sweet savor of his blood, he finds a little space to breathe, and forge him weapons against his persecutors. He suffers, but he dies not. The hand of Jehovah is above his head, and the seal of the one God is in his soul. You, Rabbi, have lived in Russia, you have lived in Asia, you have lived in Turkey, and in Arabia. You have traveled from land to land under all the stars. You have suffered insult and injury, and know better than I the degradation of our race. Has the Hebrew died in your bosom? Not less than you, O, Hebrew of the Hebrews, am I at heart a Jew. But I bide my time. I penetrate to the treasure-house of our enemies, and when the hour shall strike I will throw wide the doors and bid my people enter. Not for myself do I toil; not for myself do I dwell among the swine-eaters, and pass for one of them, but for the help and profit of our people."

He stopped, and, still quivering with excitement, resumed his seat.

Without commenting on this argument, the Patriarch proceeded with his arraignment: "It has been made known that Jacob Valmont is aiding to a high official position in this commonwealth,



a dishonest man, and I have seen to-night the unjust means he uses to silence honest opposition."

"But, Rabbi, the man I am helping is my tool; he is in my power, morally and physically, so that to whatever eminence he may rise, he shall be as my servant. Think you that the boundaries of this petty State limit my ambition? The control of this local authority is but a step in the straight path I have mapped out to lead us into the highest councils of the Nation. This State! I trouble myself little about it or the destinies of the herd that fill it, who are to me as the leaves that fall in the forest. But they, and their laws, and their wealth, are the stepping-stones over which I shall lead the Children of the Covenant dry shod into the Promised Land. This man shall rise through me to the very pinnacle of power; and Jehovah grant that you and I may see the day when the princes of the earth shall sit upon their thrones as this man, through the sufferance of a Jew, and that, prompted by the unseen power behind the throne, they shall hasten our happy deliverance out of the land of bondage!"

The Patriarch continued gravely, as before:

"It is charged that Jacob Valmont is illegally diverting from their proper uses certain moneys that he holds in trust for his ward, the daughter of his Gentile wife."

Valmont was again startled from his composure. He ran his fingers nervously through his hair, then clasped both hands tightly over his knee,

and, with an effort controlling his agitation, answered:

“Is it not written that Jael invited into her tent the great captain, Sisera, and after entertaining him with meat and strong drink, even while he slept helpless under her roof, drove a sharp nail through his temples? Is not the emancipation of Israel the first of duties in the hearts of her Levites? And if Israel thirsteth, shall not the Levite borrow the gourd of the Gentile and give her to drink? What is one simple girl, compared with a great suffering race? Shall the sword lie ready to the hand of the captain, and he refuse to seize it and strike for the freedom of his kindred? I wish the child no harm, and will see that no suffering comes to her, but Israel cries out for food, and I will give it from the Gentile’s cupboard!”

The Patriarch did not reply at once to this argument, but leaning his chin upon his clasped hands, reflected for some time. Finally he raised his head, and speaking in somewhat more decided tones than he had hitherto used, said:

“Jacob ben Naphthali, it is known to the Patriarchs of the Twelve Tribes that you are a man of superior ability.” Valmont modestly bowed his head. “The Princes of the Palace in Jerusalem are aware of your skill and talents; the Sanhedrim of the Holy Sanctuary are informed of your zeal and ardor; even he who is not named among the servants of the palace, well knows your qualities as an organizer. It needs not that I should insist on these facts to you, who, being of the

Levites of our Holy Order, understand that otherwise you could never have risen to the responsible office of Levite in the North; but I am come to admonish you as a friend, to counsel you as a father, and to instruct you as an anointed prophet, that in some things you have been thought over-zealous or misguided, and that in others you have departed from the laws of our Holy Order. You are mingling actively in the political affairs of the Gentiles, which might be well were you not therein advancing the interests of an evildoer. Your motives are not doubted; but it is written, 'Whoso is a partner with a thief hateth his own soul.' You are concealing your race, and the higher you may rise in the eyes of the Gentiles, the more will they point the finger of scorn at our people when your secret is discovered, and they say, 'He was a Jew, and was ashamed of his kindred.' It is thought that you should stand forth a confessed Hebrew. But the matter in which we account you most to blame and least defensible, is the plot you have formed against the property of your stepdaughter. Interrupt me not, but hear me patiently," as Valmont made a gesture of remonstrance. "It is written in the Book of the Law, 'If a stranger sojourn with thee in thy land, thou shalt not vex him. The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.' And again, it is written, 'Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger as one of your own country.' In treating the Gen-

tile as you would not treat one of your own people, you are transgressing the law, and are bringing a reproach upon all that shall profit by your evil-doing. The judges have already been lenient with you, valuing, as I have said, your zeal and your ability; they have made many exceptions in your behalf—behold your beardless face—when you sit among the Levites in solemn council, you alone are shaven. Among all the Twelve Tribes, also, there is none save you, that, after having put away a Jewish woman and taken a Gentile to wife, has escaped degradation from his seat in council. But, bethink you, my friend! this can not endure forever; clemency has its limits, and I beseech you to yield at least on these two points: restore to your stepdaughter, when the legal time arrives, all the inheritance she has from her mother, with its proper increase. If you can persuade her, of her generosity, to aid our cause, it will be well, but take nothing forcibly or fraudulently, for the fruit of fraud is judgment, and evil works can not prosper in the sight of God. The other point on which I beg you to yield is this: leave the wicked candidate to his own devices; be not a sharer in his wickedness.”

The words powerfully moved the hearer; not only because of the old man’s authority in the order to which they both belonged, but still more because of the sincere love with which Valmont regarded the rabbi. He had risen and was pacing slowly up and down the length of the library, but when Malachi ceased speaking, paused

before the old man, and, carefully weighing his words, answered :

“Rabbi, some latitude must be allowed me in these matters. The task before me is a difficult one; but if left to my own resources I can accomplish it. I have a plan with all its details clearly outlined in my mind; and thus far it has proved a wise one. Not a turn has been miscalculated; not a venture has gone astray. For our next move I must have two things—power and money. Without these, all my work during the past twenty years has been for naught—useless, yes, worse than useless; for I am no longer young, and life is not left me to retrace my steps. A single mischance or miscalculation may undo everything. We must have my ward’s money; we must have this venal politician’s influence, or the cause, so far as it has been intrusted to me, will be set back twenty years. Do not ask me to make this sacrifice; for I can not.”

The venerable Hebrew also now arose and, standing face to face with Valmont, lifted his right hand, and solemnly answered :

“It must be! My son, you know how gladly I would escape the painful duty of forcing you against your wish; but my charge compels me, and therefore, as your patriarch, I command you to forsake the wicked candidate and to relinquish your designs upon your stepdaughter’s wealth.”

Valmont made a gesture of despairing appeal. “I can not do it.”

Over the kindly features of the patriarch came

an expression of stern rebuke, such as Moses wore when he pronounced the curses "on this side Jordan, in the land of Moab." Straightening himself to his full height, he stood even above Valmont, who was by no means short of stature. For a moment he appeared to hesitate; then, drawing from his bosom a curiously engraved signet ring, he placed it upon his right forefinger.

On seeing the ring, Valmont bowed his head, and covered his face with his hands.

The old man then took from the same place of concealment a little parchment roll from which he read a few sentences in Hebrew. He replaced the roll in his bosom, and extended his hand to Valmont, who in submissive reverence kissed the mysterious ring; after which the rabbi returned it to its hiding place.

Tears of compassion were in the patriarch's eyes as he regarded the man standing in deep dejection before him; but there was a ring of enthusiasm in his voice when, after a brief pause, he cried :

"Look up, my son, your work awaits you;" and as Valmont lifted his head, he added, "It is a hard duty that forces me to cross your will; but he that layeth his hand to the plow must not look back. You are still young, and are already counted among the greatest of our sacred order. Still greater shall you be; for 'he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely!' In you are my hopes founded for Israel's future; for on you, more than

on others, the God of Israel has bestowed a clear mind and the will that sways men. Therefore, I say, press forward in the strength of the Mighty One; for the hope of His people is in thee. And now farewell. The night is far spent." So saying, he turned to the door.

Valmont in silence took the lamp, and preceded him downstairs.

They stepped out of the door upon the veranda; and then Valmont spoke:

"Your blessing, father!"

The old man's face lighted up with a tender smile. He extended his hands over Valmont, and raising his eyes to heaven, said, "The Lord bless thee and make His face to shine upon thee!"

For an instant the hands rested lightly on the bowed head.

When Valmont raised his eyes the form of his visitor was already lost in the shadows of the lawn.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.

It was long past midnight when Rabbi Malachi left Jacob Valmont crushed and disheartened by the blow that had been given to his ambitious projects.

The hushed summer night seemed to feel the benediction of God. Hours before, the moon had

passed the meridian, and now, with a softer, tenderer sheen, sank toward the horizon. Not a breath of wind rustled the leaves to awaken the birds and insects sleeping among them. The shadows, long and broad and soft, lay motionless upon the dewy sward and on the glistening surface of the graveled drive. The white houses of the village shone forth transfigured in the silvery light, and beyond the edges of the town could be caught evanescent glimpses of the river, gently gliding out of the land of shadows to meet the morning sun far seaward. Not the faintest sound broke the pulseless silence, save at intervals the soft murmur of the water flowing in smooth current over the verge of the dam.

Heaven and earth were filled with peace; but there was no peace in the heart of Jacob Valmont.

A man of inflexible purpose and unconquerable will, he had for years past devoted himself, body and soul, to the task of emancipating the Hebrew race, and gathering into one great nation the scattered children of Abraham. When the project was first presented to him, he was a young man of limited means but generous education and boundless enthusiasm, and he embraced the scheme with a fervor of self-devotion that absorbed his entire being. The Holy Order at that time comprised but a handful of isolated philanthropists, devoting themselves chiefly to the succor of their poor and oppressed kindred in Europe and Asia. The erection of a Jewish state was to



them but a pleasant dream for the future. But after Valmont's advent, as his influence in their counsels grew stronger, this became more and more the dominant object.

To him it was from the beginning all-important, and to its furtherance he had literally devoted his life. Naturally endowed with a sensitive conscience and a keen instinct of honor and justice, he had sacrificed to the demands of his task, one by one, every scruple of his conscience and every emotion of his heart. Almost at the beginning he divorced a wife whom he truly loved, simply because she could not or would not second his efforts as fully as he wished; and since that time, as the situation seemed to demand it, he had done violence, one after the other, to every dear sentiment of his soul. Not easy, indeed, had it been for him to trample upon his gentler instincts; for there are few men who could suffer more keenly than he from the consciousness of ignoble actions. But he had devoted himself wholly, and therefore he would allow no personal scruple or feeling to swerve him from his course.

It may appear incredible that there should arise in this nineteenth century a man, fully imbued with its culture and spirit, that would seriously revive the old dream of the Maccabees. But it must not be forgotten that the Jews are to-day as truly a "peculiar people" as they were in the days of Solomon, and that however far its members may be separated in place, they are, in heart and faith, more closely bound

together than any other race; and that to a Jew, under whatever star his lot may be cast, "our people" are the heirs of the promise the world over. There is not a Jewish mother under heaven whose soul does not exult at the first wail of a new-born son, as she thinks, with an ineffable hope, "Perhaps this is at last the Promised One." No Hebrew rises into prominence, but the eyes of his brethren in all lands turn toward him, bright with expectation, questioning, "Art thou the man?" Disraeli, Gambetta, the first Rothschild, and Montefiore, each in turn has been the cynosure of Israel; and as each in turn has passed without a sign, the patient people has shaken sadly its bowed head, murmuring softly, "Not yet, not yet; how long, O Lord, how long?"

So, more than eighteen hundred years ago, they questioned the Divine Teacher in the judgment hall of Pilate, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" And though he answered, "Thou sayest that I am," they denied Him; for He refused the sign which the race demands. The son of a Galilean; the preacher of beatitudes; the advocate of loving kindness, peace, and good will—what was there in Him that they should desire Him? Nothing, surely; and the people, mocking at this Prince of Salem, answered all pleas in His behalf by crying out the more, "Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Even when the Roman governor caused to be written upon the board that was fixed over His agonized head "Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudæorum," they insisted that it

should be changed to read, "He *called* Himself the King of the Jews." But Pilate answered, "*Quod scripsi scriptum est!*" Yet neither Pilate's fiat nor the divine love of the suffering Christ could make them acknowledge a king whose scepter was a reed, whose crown was of thorns, and whose throne was a cross; and for them the Messiah is yet to come, crowned with the glory of heaven and armed with the invincible majesty of the King of Kings.

Week after week, in the synagogues, wherever the sun shines, does this strange people gather to hear the grand prophecies of Isaiah, foretelling a deliverance yet to come—"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." And their faith wavers not; "For the Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" "Fear not; for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; every one that is called by my name."

And if the Jew has hoped, the Gentile has feared; and this fear has furnished the gall in more than one bitter persecution. That the hope on the one side, and the fear on the other, exist to the present day, is amply proved by history;

while literature, also, adds its evidence. The recent massacres in Russia, Austria, and Bulgaria, that thrilled the Christian world with a horror not yet forgotten, witness for it, no less than the persecutions in Frankfort and Florence a century and more ago; and at least two great works—“*Die Räuber*,” of Schiller, and George Eliot’s “*Daniel Deronda*”—bear witness to the same hope that inspired Jacob Valmont.

For a long time after the patriarch left him, Valmont stood dazed and stupefied. At last an owl in one of the trees of the common set up a doleful tremolo, which recalled him to himself.

“So, this is the end!” he murmured. “After years of work and waiting, all my toil undone. Well, it is hard!”

He began pacing the veranda, but the noise of his footfall sounded strangely loud, and he sank into a seat.

“If I had foreseen this result I might have averted it. The facts might have been presented more strongly. Now there is no appeal. Yet had all been known, certainly this decree would never have been given!” His voice grew stronger and its tone more argumentative. “But no; how can he, in Jerusalem, understand the conditions existing in an American State? It is impossible. Traditions, customs, habits of thought—everything so different. No, he could not grasp the situation, if it lay in full view before him.”

There was silence for a moment, and when Valmont resumed he spoke more softly.

“What, then, can I do? Rebel?” At this word he shuddered and cast about him a swift involuntary glance, as if intuitively frightened by the bold suggestion of his thoughts. “But I am sworn to obedience.” And burying his face in his hands, he remained silent for a long time.

When he spoke again, it was with greater deliberation.

“And if I disobeyed, what then? Dishonor; ostracism; degradation; a byword among my people of all nations; a name to be handed down forever and ever in the execrations of all generations—possibly death; yet that would be preferable. But suppose my rebellion secret; and suppose it ultimately successful—what then? What then? I tremble to think of the glory of it! Yet why should I tremble? Are my eyes too weak to bear the light? Are my shoulders too narrow for the burden? Or is my head too low to wear the crown?” No longer cowering, he sat erect, grasping with rigid fingers the arms of his chair. There was a rapt look in the pale face, and a light of high purpose in the eyes that gazed boldly into the heavens, as if they beheld there already the gleam of a descending crown. Soon, however, the mood of the enthusiast passed, and he sank back into his seat; and when he spoke again, it was with the calmness of one striving to weigh his subject fairly.

“It is folly! This half-hearted, conciliatory course, if persisted in, will ruin the cause. Yet who can blame our leaders if they fail to recognize

the demands of the situation? They are imbued with all the narrow conservatism of our ancient race, and comprehend nothing of the liberal needs of the hour. Born aloof, educated and trained aloof, and living aloof from the current of modern civilization and modern thought, how should they be prepared for coping with it? As well expect a man, with the sword and shield of Joshua, to succeed in battle against a foeman armed with a Winchester rifle. So, they are leading our cause to a hopeless issue. Joshua! Yes, he commanded the moon to stand still; and now, forsooth, his successor will do more; he will command science, politics, and civilization to turn back twenty centuries. But the world will roll on and crush the atoms that strive to stay its course. The holy cause is doomed, unless some valiant arm, skilled in the arts of modern combat; some earnest mind, learned in modern diplomacy, interpose to save it. Am I the man? Thus far my plans have succeeded—and the future is born out of the past. I will put me to the proof; and if I shall be sacrificed for Israel, so be it. But if I succeed, Jehovah's promise will have fulfilled itself, and Israel shall be exalted above all nations. The scattered sons of Abraham, that now creep fearfully about in the shadows of the world, shall sit once more among the great ones of the earth—yea, above them, bearing their heads proudly, as becomes the chosen of the Mighty One."

His face glowed, as he rose to his feet, quivering with the spirit of prophecy.

"And in the midst of them, seated upon the throne of David—Ah, who knows the future? Is not the guerdon worth all risks—life, reputation, honor, wealth, almost immortality itself?"

He spread wide his arms.

"O, wandering outcasts of Judea, lift up your eyes; for your deliverance is at hand! 'Thou sun, stand still on Gibeon, and thou moon on Ajalon;' for Israel goes to war with her oppressors!"

In a moment he turned to enter the house, saying, "The die is cast. I am resolved to pursue my plans; and when success is won, even the good Malachi, who frowns and fears to-day, must say, 'well done,' when he knows that I have had the courage to rebel for the salvation of our people."

The dawn was beginning to tinge the eastern horizon; the light morning zephyrs stirred in the foliage, and in the dim sky overhead a pair of swooping nighthawks were crying restlessly, when Valmont, calm as a penitent after absolution, sought his bed, and slept the sleep of the just.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TWO HOUSES.

Life throbs on as steadily in the silent night as in the noisy day, and the revolving globe measures off its course as surely beneath the placid stars as

under the garish sun, bringing back the morning as it brought the night.

A faint glow, appearing from behind the eastern hills, stole up the arch of heaven, still shimmering with the rays of the departing moon, and revealed, as it grew stronger, the filmy veils of mist which awakening Nature brushed from her face, as with a sleepy hand.

The thin vapors ascending from the river and the marshy meadows beside it, crept up the face of the rising ground, and forming in solid masses about the tops of the rugged hills, paused there a moment to greet the rising sun; then drifted off to westward, transfigured with his rays. The birds began their matin songs, mingling their carols with the sounds from barnyard and street—the crowing of cocks and the cackling of hens; the stamping of horses on barn floors, and the muffled tread of cattle which, the morning milking over, the village urchins drove browsing through the streets.

The houses also showed signs of awakening life; and among them the one that sheltered Valmont and his stepdaughter.

As the windows in the lower story of this rambling structure were thrown open one by one, the light, rushing in, revealed the angular, black-clad form of Miss Waithe, the housekeeper, who, dust-cloth in hand, was making her morning rounds.

Her face, naturally grim, was always especially severe at this time of the day; as though life, to



her austere mind, were a hostile army, and each succeeding day of it an insidious enemy that must be met with sternest determination.

Not a film of web, not a speck of dust, no thread upon the floor, escaped her notice. When she left a room she left it finished. The slightest disarrangement had been corrected, and everything had been restored to the place that she had set apart for it, in accordance with her severe conception of the fitness of things. The chairs were placed at a certain distance from one another and the nearest wall, with a precision almost alarming. The books upon the center tables, for the most part of severe and solemn appearance, had found their proper places again, and lay in nicely graded piles. An atmosphere of precision, respectable but cheerless—in short, the very spirit of that estimable woman—seemed to pervade each room.

But, while duteously discharging all obligations to her employer, it puzzled her to determine what a young girl just beginning life could be thinking of when, neglectful of the serious affairs of the future, she devoted her waking hours to the planning and making of silly jimcracks such as Miss Larned seemed to delight in scattering about the house, to be dusted and kept in order.

There were the wall-pockets and the brackets; easels, “new-fangled” easy chairs, and ornaments—particularly those fragile vases, so different from the solid structures that used to grace the mantel shelf. The foreign grasses and ferns that used to rest in those old vases—where were they? Gone!

Scattered; forgotten; and their places occupied by fresh flowers. But the petals of these fresh flowers were "forever droppin' round." Often had she said to her young mistress, "They ain't no prettier here than they be in the garding; and they'd last a spell out there." But the young miss still picked them and brought them into the house. "It did beat all; it did beat all."

Thus soliloquizing, she would pause at some open window that commanded, through the surrounding trees, glimpses of the houses along the road bordering the park, to look for signs of life in her neighbors.

At such times the doctor's mansion, which she considered the especial rival of her own domain, received the lion's share of attention. There Mrs. Fink presided.

The contrast presented by these estimable ladies, at such times as they were seen together, was striking. They were direct opposites in every particular except the skill and judgment required to keep a large and busy house in order.

To the angular severity of Miss Waithe, one found in Mrs. Fink the pleasantest antidote imaginable; a comely, sunny face; a plump, well-rounded form; a kind, motherly heart; and a disposition as bright and cheerful as the brightest day.

Perhaps she possessed no strongly marked traits of character; perhaps she was a little inclined to gossip and the commonplace; yet those in trouble turned to her—the young for sympathy, and the poor for help.

Her house, like her heart, was free from shadows. Excepting the two tall elms in front, no trees stood near enough to shade it. The wholesome sunlight had free access to every room.

So the house suited her, and she the house. Well might she be proud of it; for both without and within, it was the most luxurious dwelling to be found in many miles.

Both tall and broad, and built of the white marble that is quarried in the neighborhood, it had a substantial, aristocratic appearance that was to Miss Waithe as a thorn in the flesh.

Indoors, the spacious rooms were furnished and ornamented in excellent taste.

Such, in a few words, was the house into which Mr. Huntingford had been so unexpectedly introduced; and such the cheerful woman who cared for it and him.

To complete the family picture, but little is needed. Besides the doctor, and Chang, his personal factotum, there were only the servant girls—daughters of some poor neighbors—and the members of Mrs. Fink's own family—her husband, just now gone to bed for a much-needed rest, after his professional business of the previous night, and two rosy-cheeked children—little John and Jessie, at play in the garden.

The morning was still young when Huntingford awoke, to find with some surprise that his surroundings were quite unfamiliar. As a strong link between the present and the past, however, he felt the bandages that encased his hand. A

glance at these and a feeling of soreness in the hand carried him back to the scene of the accident; and in an instant, all the strange events that followed were clearly recalled.

While thinking them over, his eyes wandered through the open window of his room out into the bright sunlight, where the birds were whistling to one another, and the leaves were fluttering in the breeze. He heard the shouts of the children playing beneath his window. The charms of the summer morning were too strong to be resisted. With Chang's help he was soon dressed—this time not altogether in his own clothing, as, at Dr. Wayne's suggestion, Doctor Fink's wardrobe had been drawn upon to the extent of a coat, which, although not quite so stylish as the scorched garment, fitted its new wearer well enough, and was a very acceptable substitute. Thus arrayed, he sallied forth, and strolling about the grounds, soon came upon his host in the stables, where the latter entertained him with a view of the horses, and some pleasant comments upon their good qualities, until the welcome sound of a bell called them to the breakfast-table.

There are times when, after the most radical and unforeseen changes, finding ourselves in circumstances entirely different from any we have known, we feel perfectly at home; as if the new surroundings were not strange, but old and loved acquaintances; as if we had suddenly stepped into our proper niche in the wall of life. Perhaps this may be owing to the tact of others; or perhaps to

some quality of good fellowship in ourselves. Perhaps it is owing to a pleasant light; to a comfortable chair; to the perfume of fresh flowers; to the sight of happy faces; yet, without questioning the cause, we are likely to settle back into our niche, contented and happy.

Such were the feelings of Mr. Huntingford. The essence of hospitality, comfort, and good will was in the air; and he took his place at the table with much heartfelt if unexpressed satisfaction that for once he had escaped from the hubbub and cheerlessness of a public table, to this quiet family circle.

The dining-room was large and cool, and opened upon the veranda, beyond which were the green lawn, the broad, quiet village street, and the majestic trees in the square. Little breaths of morning breeze wandered in now and then, fluttering the white curtains and the edges of the whiter tablecloth. At the head of the table, before the coffee-urn, sat cheery Mrs. Fink, flanked on either hand by the bright-faced children, while the doctor and Mr. Huntingford sat facing each other on opposite sides of the table.

Huntingford was an easy talker, and endowed with the faculty of making himself at home with others, while inspiring them with confidence in himself. He had been seated but a few moments before Doctor Wayne and Mrs. Fink felt well acquainted with him; though he carefully avoided for the present any hint of the real object of his visit to the neighborhood. Besides, a man who

has distinguished himself by an act of heroism, needs little verbal introduction to right-minded people.

The conversation naturally drifted to the events of the previous evening, and, much to the young man's embarrassment, seemed inclined to dwell upon his bravery and presence of mind. He made an effort to change the subject, saying, "Where were you last evening, Mrs. Fink, when, according to the doctor's story, I was doing the heroic over in the park? I did not see you at all."

"I came out on the veranda just in time to see the crowd following you to the office," she answered.

"And before that," the doctor supplemented, "we were putting the children to bed. You must know, Mr. Huntingford, that while Jessie goes to sleep without any fuss, Jack here has to be tucked in, and sometimes soundly scolded, before he will let his mother leave him;" and the doctor shook his finger very severely at the healthy-looking youngster, sitting between his mother and Huntingford; whereat Jack looked sheepish and his sister correspondingly elated.

But the boy's appetite and spirits returned when Huntingford, following the doctor, said, "Why, Jack, my boy, I would not have believed that of you; yet after all I don't think it is to be wondered at. Jack shows good judgment to my thinking. I remember that when I was a little boy, Jack, I used to think it the nicest thing in the world to have my mother take me on

her knee and tell me stories before I went to bed."

He spoke quietly and with a smile, bending over to look into the child's face. The sentiment he expressed was commonplace enough, but there was something in the ring of his voice that dimmed for a moment the eyes of the sympathetic mother, and brought a warm glow to the doctor's heart.

Jack looked up at the young man with a smile of confidence, and then, struck by a sudden thought, turned to his mother, asking, "Mamma, was Mr. Huntingford ever a little boy like me?"

Huntingford answered the question: "Yes, indeed I was, my little man, and not so long ago, either. I haven't had time yet to forget how to make kites and rabbit-hutches, and lots of other nice things."

Jack's eyes sparkled, and in his excitement he stood up. "Oh! will you make me a kite?" he exclaimed.

"And me a doll's house?" cried the tiny maid from the opposite side of the table.

"Children!" interposed the mother gently, "papa's asleep."

The voices instantly quieted. "But will you?" the two children persisted in softer tones.

"I fear you have gotten yourself into a scrape," laughed the doctor.

"Don't bother Mr. Huntingford, children," added Mrs. Fink.

But the young man answered the children:

"Indeed I will, if I have a chance, before I go back home."

"Then I hope you'll stay here a long while," said little Jessie.

"And I echo the sentiment," said the doctor. "But we haven't yet heard where Mrs. Fink was last evening. I interrupted her when she was about to tell us, and now beg pardon. Mrs. Fink, please give an account of yourself from the time when you saw the boy and his most valiant rescuer"—with a smile at Huntingford—"coming up the walk."

"Well, as I was saying, I didn't know what to think." (She was not saying anything of the kind, but Huntingford soon learned to overlook such little inaccuracies.) "At first, I didn't know what had happened; but pretty soon Miss Larned came up and told me all about it. Then Chang came out of the office, and I went over to Mrs. Miller's with him. And now let me help you to another dish of these berries."

Huntingford declined.

"Another cup of coffee, then?" she suggested, with insistant hospitality.

"If you please," he answered. "And now, if the doctor will favor me with the cream, I feel that, thanks to you, I shall be able to exist contented with myself and at peace with all the world for some hours to come."

"That is what we call 'a Christian spirit,'" said the doctor.

"And how much it depends on the state of



one's digestion and the hospitality of one's host!" Huntingford added. They arose from the table.

"Now," said the doctor, "I usually take a drive into the country during the forenoon. Will you accompany me?"

"You are very kind, and I would like to, very much, but——"

"No 'buts,' then, if you please," the doctor interrupted. "We are getting garrulous in our old age," slyly including Mrs. Fink in the "we." "We must have someone to talk to, and you seem to take so much interest in our country life that I should like to show you more of it."

"If you place the matter in that light, I shall be only too glad to accept."

So it was settled, and the two gentlemen left the dining-room to prepare for their drive.

With the growth of acquaintance, Huntingford's confidence in the doctor's goodness and wisdom increased; and, having determined that because of the old gentleman's intimate relations with Miss Larned he must warmly espouse her cause, the young man was resolved to make a clean breast of his object in coming to the village: what had caused his visit, and what he proposed to do in Adairsville. And, realizing that this drive would offer an opportunity for undisturbed conversation, he felt that during it he must take the doctor into his confidence. Therefore, it was with much trepidation that he waited for the time to come, not knowing to what his intended *confidences* might lead.

## CHAPTER V.

## CONFIDENCES.

There are men with sight so thoroughly trained that the detection of slight variations in plants, animals, or minerals, becomes instinctive, and such men may be found among any group of fifty persons. And there are others whose senses and sympathies, more delicately organized or more highly trained, are able to discern among men those that, without external sign, stand mentally or morally apart from the masses, and will repay cultivation. Doctor Wayne was one of these discerners of character, and looking back over his forty odd years of adult life, could truly say that no man had ever betrayed his trust.

At twenty he was graduated from Harvard College, and went immediately afterward to France, where he studied medicine, and, on taking his degree, received an appointment as dresser in a regiment of the French army. Under MacMahon he passed through the brilliant campaign in the Crimea, from the crossing of the Alma to the fall of Sebastopol. In the course of this hard service, his skill and devotion to duty rapidly advanced him to the position of surgeon-major. After the treaty of Paris, the French army being out of active service, he obtained his discharge, and spent

the next three years traveling over Europe and the East.

He was in St. Petersburg in 1859, when the news from his native country began to point toward the great struggle that opened two years later with the tragic fall of Sumter. He came home in time to enter enthusiastically into the famous political contest of 1860, in which he did yeoman service for his party and for his old friend and college chum, Edward Larned, who was nominated for Congress in that year.

Every American knows the sequences of that election. Congressman Larned made but one speech in the House of Representatives; wherein he tendered his resignation as a law-maker, and hurried home to form a regiment, of which he became colonel. Dr. Wayne also volunteered his services to the Government, and went into the field as surgeon of the same regiment. The story of this band of patriots—the Vermont volunteers—has been told by pens abler than ours. Suffice it to say, that officers and men reënlisted twice during the course of the war; after which the remnant—only a handful of the original eight hundred odd—received honorable discharges, and came home to be bullied and forgotten, as it is the traditional custom of republics to bully and forget their defenders. But when Colonel Larned returned, he was General Larned, and Doctor Wayne's discharge read, "Colonel Francis G. Wayne, Surgeon —th Army Corps."

Many of our readers will remember how, on

the closing of the war, all our political economists of the press, all our philosophers of the corner groceries, and all our wiseacres of the parlors and the dining-rooms shook their heads omniously, and demonstrated beyond a peradventure the impossibility of disbanding the armies of the Republic, and the equal impossibility of maintaining them; and how it was proved to be as clear as the clearest mud, that the armies that had saved the Republic from destruction, must now, by all the laws of unalterable fate, forthwith set to and destroy it. And they will also remember how, while all these little solons were proving that they could not and would not do it, the gallant soldiers, weary of war and blood, turning their eyes to the fields, factories, and offices of the land, discovered the ways of peace awaiting them, and setting their feet therein, went quietly about their business, leaving theorizing to those that liked it.

General Larned and Surgeon Wayne, settling in New York, soon found (as every useful man will find) that their countrymen had work for them to do just as soon as their country could spare them; and, be it whispered, said countrymen offered a far more satisfactory *quid pro quo* than said collective country. Consequently, before the Nation began to talk of calling their old commander to the White House, General Larned found himself partner in the prosperous firm of Wells & Larned, and Surgeon Wayne was already beginning to find it necessary to narrow down

his rapidly-growing practice more and more to special lines.

Up to this time both had remained bachelors; but one evening early in the year of grace 1866 the doctor drove some distance out of his way to visit Mr. Larned, whom he had neglected for some time. They drank together a glass or two of port—for they considered the lighter wines beneath their years—and then, from the heart of a cloud of contemplative cigar smoke, like Jove launching a thunderbolt, Doctor Wayne launched a very bombshell of news.

“Ned, old boy,” said he, “I’m going to marry!”

“The devil you are!” said Ned; and then burst into a fit of laughter which continued so long that the doctor, possibly fearing apoplexy, brought him up sharply.

“Well, in the name of all that’s funny, what do you find so amusing in my announcement?”

“Funny!” cried Ned, still laughing, “I should say so! Ha! ha! ha! That is too good! If you’d waited five minutes, Frank, I’d have let out something of the same kind myself, for I’m on the list, too!”

And thereupon, like any pair of unfledged youngsters, they fell to shaking hands, congratulating each other, and lauding to the skies their respective lady-loves, so that Master Cupid must have plumed himself mightily upon his prowess in so fairly winging a brace of birds as old and wary as these.

Time passed, and the bonds of friendship grew stronger and straighter between them day by day. They were married together and made their wedding journey in company, and when there came into the world a little Miss Larned, it was out of the question that she should be named by any other name than that graced by Mrs. Dr. Wayne, or that any couple under the blue skies but Frank and May Wayne should stand god-parents for this tiny but important May Wayne Larned. Five years passed thus happily, and at the age of forty-two, Doctor Wayne could look around him and thank Heaven for good fortune beyond that allotted to most men. Respected and admired by those that knew him, eminent in his profession, possessed of a fortune which was steadily growing, and blest, as he earnestly believed, with a peerless wife, he began whispering to himself, "Only a year or two more, and I will lay by the probe and scalpel and take me wholly to my books and pen; I will throw by my profession and turn professor"—when there came a blow that set at naught his skill and wrecked his dreams. The wife, whom he loved with a tender devotion that is rarer than diamonds in this world, was taken from him. He laid aside his instruments, but the pen no longer charmed him; and within the year following Mrs. Wayne's death, he began wandering—now in China, now in Africa, and again in Europe. Three years were consumed thus in restless loneliness, when he received a message from Mrs. Larned, telling him that his

old friend had fallen dangerously sick, and begging him to come to them. He hurried back to New York in time to receive from the dying man, as a sacred charge, the wife and the daughter.

With an object in life he found himself happier than he had been during all his wanderings, and he devoted himself heartily to the interests of the widow and her child, until her marriage with Valmont relieved him of the responsibility.

Meanwhile, about ten years before the opening of our story, he felt himself becoming an old man, and with an old man's longing for home had returned to Adairsville, built him a house, and settled down into the life of a country doctor. But the spur of young ambition was wanting, and ere long he was ready to relinquish the practice. Therefore, when Dr. Fink, fresh from Bellevue, settled in the village, the older physician found many opportunities for helping him to patients. The young man's earnestness and devotion to his profession proved him worthy of larger favors, and when he married shortly afterward, Doctor Wayne turned over to him the entire practice. But the great marble house was lonesome, and the young couple were easily persuaded to share it with the old doctor and his two curious retainers—Chang, the Chinaman, and "Wash," the negro ex-slave.

The latter was, in his way, as much a genius as the former. The doctor had picked him up somewhere in the South, "endu'in' ob de wah," as Washington himself expressed it, "w'en I'se

nuffin' but a po' reffigee a-fleein' fum de raff to kum." Since that time the negro had clung to his protector with a devotion known only to those that have once been in bondage.

It was he who brought the horse and carriage to the door, and waited for the doctor and Huntingford. When they appeared the gray-headed negro drew himself up in exaggerated military order and gravely saluted them.

Old Dolly had drawn this identical chaise up and down hill, through highways and by-ways, through sunshine and rain, through the muds of spring and the dusts of summer, during ten long years of useful equine life; and her habits, in this time, had become as methodical as those of her owner. Consequently, the moment she heard the doctor's cheery whistle she set off at a smart, steady pace down the street, and without signal from the reins turned into the highway that runs southeast from the common.

"She appears to know her business, doctor," remarked Huntingford.

"I wish I always knew mine as well, and could attend to it as unfalteringly," the doctor answered with a quiet smile. "Old Doll and I have made a long record together, and I can witness for her that she has never failed in her duty. I fear that if she could speak she might put me to the blush with a different report of her master. And, by the way, Mr. Huntingford, that is a famous old steed—born in the purple, one might say. She is a thoroughbred Morgan—you know the Morgan



stock?"—tentatively—"or are you too thoroughly a city man to take any interest in stock talk?"

"By no means. I am an enthusiast on the subject, and you can't tire me, even with pedigrees. Doll shows her points clearly enough. It needs but a glance at that leg and that action to see that she is of pure strain."

"Yes, yes," responded the doctor, well pleased with this commendation of his favorite; "but she's stiffening up a little—like her master. We have both shown paces in our time; but we're aging. You might not think it to look at her now, but she's done her two-fifty on this very road, in her fresher days, in cases of urgency, and kept it up toward four and five minutes during the better part of many a ten hours. But we're both past our speedy days, and have settled down perforce into a comfortable jog that will have to carry us through the rest of our lives. She has a son, however, who promises to do her credit."

"Then you have other horses besides those I saw this morning?"

"Oh, yes; why, bless me!" ejaculated the doctor, "I believe I've forgotten to tell you where we are going. I have a modest little farm a few miles out here in the country, where I amuse myself with amateur stock-raising. Old age, you know, needs its dissipations as well as youth, Mr. Huntingford; and since I have given up my practice I have to find some occupation for my idle hands, or the old gentleman with the cloven foot would be sure to get me into mischief."

"Well," answered Huntingford, laughing, "I am afraid he sometimes finds my hands apt enough for his uses; but I don't think much of a man without a hobby, and yours is surely an interesting one."

"To be sure—hobby-horses"—returned the Doctor, with an old gentleman's enjoyment of the pun. "But I have two; the second, though, is, more truly speaking, a religion; it is my god-daughter. Ah, Mr. Huntingford; if you knew what that dear child has been to me you could comprehend my enthusiasm."

"I can at least understand it, without that, Doctor," said Huntingford.

The old gentleman was delighted.

"Is she not a sweet child? But wait until you know her, Mr. Huntingford, wait until you know her; then you will understand how good and gentle and generous a woman can be. But I fear"—with an inflection of solicitude in his voice—"that the poor girl is leading an unsatisfactory life in this little out-of-the-way village. She has no friends of her own age, and no companions excepting me; and I am old and saddened—old and saddened."

There was silence between them for some moments. Then the Doctor continued, thoughtfully:

"In her home she has only the society of her stepfather, Mr. Valmont. You may have noticed him at the meeting last night; he was the first speaker. I fear, however, that she finds but little

companionship in him; for he is a man of business, entirely absorbed in his affairs, and at the best uncongenial to a sensitive and sympathetic young creature like May. Then there is Miss Waithe—a superlatively correct housekeeper, to be sure, but anything rather than companionable. Poor child, she never complains. Indeed, I suppose she scarcely realizes the want; but it must exist, nevertheless. But what am I thinking about! ‘Dear me, I am pouring myself out to you as if we were old acquaintances, instead of friends of a few hours’ standing. You will understand that the subject is very important to me, Mr. Huntingford.”

“And to me, also,” answered the young man, plunging nervously *in medias res*.

The Doctor turned and regarded him inquiringly.

With some trepidation, Huntingford began his confession:

“When I accepted your invitation to this ride, I did so partly because I saw in it an opportunity to tell you my errand in Adairsville.”

The Doctor looked surprised, but said nothing.

“Though I never met Miss Larned before last evening, my mission here concerns her very materially; and as you are her nearest friend, I feel myself very lucky in having made your acquaintance so early; for you can help me better than anyone else in the business I have in hand. I am a junior partner in the Wells-Larned Company.”

"The Wells-Larned Company!" exclaimed the Doctor, "Why, that is Ned Larned's old firm!"

"Exactly so," answered Huntingford; "and bondsman for Jacob Valmont as trustee of the Larned estate. I have been sent for the purpose of quietly finding out the manner in which the trust is executing. Not that we distrust Mr. Valmont, you understand," he added quickly, "but purely as a business precaution. Will you aid me, Doctor?"

"Of course, Mr. Huntingford, anything that touches May is of the utmost importance to me. But in what do you require assistance?"

"In everything, Doctor. But that you may fully comprehend my task, I will state the case: Mr. Larned's fortune, a considerable one at the beginning, has grown to unwieldy proportions. Mr. Valmont has proved himself an able manager, and until about four years ago the increase was regular and satisfactory. But at that time the estate—consisting largely of iron mines in this vicinity—began to show signs of contraction. This falling off was at first naturally ascribed to the depression in the iron trade; and on the revival of business, about nine months ago, it was expected that the interests committed to Mr. Valmont's care would sympathize with the general movement. But, on the contrary, the decline has been more marked during the past year than before. This circumstance has naturally given rise to some uneasiness among the active members of our company; an uneasiness which is aggra-

vated by the fact that the trust ceases at the end of the present year, when Miss Larned reaches her majority. Mr. Valmont gives as reasons for the lessened production of the mines, increasing difficulty in reaching the ore and lack of facilities for handling the product. Were no interests but those of the company involved, probably this explanation would have been satisfactory; but in consideration of our responsibility to Miss Larned—a charge that has a profound personal interest for her father's old partner, Mr. Wells—it was thought best that one of us should look into the matter, without prejudice to Mr. Valmont, and see what is wanting. As he does not know me, I was chosen for the work—though I am free to confess I don't half like it. And now, Doctor, you will understand how you can assist me."

"I thank you for your confidence," the Doctor returned, "and am entirely at your service. Ask me anything you wish to know, and I'll inform you to the best of my ability."

"Well, first of all I'd like to know Mr. Valmont's reputation among his neighbors."

The Doctor's eyes twinkled slightly as he answered, "Among our local Antonios he is regarded as a marvelously shrewd and capable manager."

"And how do you, personally, regard him?"

"I?" exclaimed the old gentleman. "I also think he is very shrewd; and indeed I have feared that he is too shrewd. I have a strong aversion to

criticising my neighbors, Mr. Huntingford, but since you have given me your confidence so frankly, and since the question directly concerns me, I will answer as frankly. The truth is, that while I have nothing tangible to warrant my distrust, I have long had an uneasy feeling of suspicion concerning Mr. Valmont's motives. It may be owing to my jealous interest in May—old age is prone to suspicion anyway, you know," he interjected with a smile—"or it may be that his infernally cold and self-contained manner evokes from a sympathetic nature like mine a sense of injury. Be that as it may, I must admit that the knowledge of your errand affords me great relief. I am glad to know that he is under surveillance, and I may add, with perfect candor, that from what little I know of you, I am pleased that the task has fallen to you."

"Thank you. I am not so well pleased with it myself; but I will try to acquit myself creditably. As yet I have scarcely had time to get my bearings. I shall, of course, pay a visit to the mines; do you think I can secure an invitation?"

"I doubt it. In all the time I have known him, Mr. Valmont has never asked me out there; and the same might safely be said, I believe, for the rest of his neighbors. Mr. Valmont is a wonderful keeper of his own counsels, and whether he has everything or nothing to conceal, has always impressed me as working beneath the surface—without intending any pun, you understand,"

smilingly. "However, we will call on May this evening, if it suits you, when you can meet Valmont, and seek the invitation, which is, of course, desirable."

"Many thanks? The programme suits me perfectly. Should I manage to obtain the permission, my course will be clear. If I fail, I will at least avoid a refusal, and can then happen in the neighborhood and 'cheek' my way."

"An admirable plan," the Doctor returned approvingly. But you are missing all the beauties of our ride; now, what do you say to that for a pastoral scene?" stopping Doll at the top of a commanding rise.

The picture was charming. Before them and on each hand the green fields fell gently away into a shallow vale traversed by a little stream, that, with many idle windings and doublings on its track, watered the grassy meadows bordering it. Under the scattered trees lay lazy, ruminative cows, watching their hungrier companions cropping the juicy grass. Close beside the road stood a neat cottage, muffled to its eaves in climbing roses; and on the far hill-sides, broad fields of dark-green and golden wheat and paler rye shimmered in the clear sunlight. Before them, the white road rounded down the valley, across the stream, with its quaint stone bridge, past placid farms, and out of sight over the hill-top in the far background.

Huntingford looked abroad over the wide, fair prospect, and breathed a deep sigh of pleasure.

It was grateful for lungs accustomed to the smoke and smell tainted atmosphere of the town, merely to drink in the pure air blowing over space so pure. And under the influence of this fresh summer morning his task seemed easier.

Presently the Doctor, gathering up the reins, whistled softly, and Dolly resumed her gentle trot down the smooth road.

After a time, the conversation, so pleasantly interrupted, was resumed, until Dolly, slackening her pace, turned abruptly into a lane leading to a large stone farm-house, which stood with its barn, corn-cribs, and sheds well back from the highway.

"Here we are, at last," said the Doctor, as the mare stopped before a gate that barred the entrance to the farm-yard.

He whistled; and presently, in response to this signal, a tall, ram-shackly, unmistakable Yankee, emerged from the stable, and lounged toward them, with his hands in his pockets. He took his own time in opening the gate, and as the Doctor drove through, saluted him familiarly, with:

"How d'e do, Doc? I cal'late we're goin' tew hev a spell o' fa'r weather."

"Good-morning, Hezekiah," the Doctor responded pleasantly. "How are your horses coming on?"

"Wall," answered the Yankee in a deliberate tone, as he sauntered along beside the carriage, "I guess they might be wuss. But say, Doc, I reckon we'll have to git a sling for that tarnation



brute, Luce; he's a gittin' wuss an' wuss. Las' night he kicked down the pa'tition in his stall, an' this mornin' he came nigh sendin' Bill to kingdom-kum. I vow, but he's a tearer!" chuckling inwardly at the spirit of his favorite.

"Perhaps we'd better get rid of him," returned the Doctor, as Doll drew up under the shade of a great elm beside the porch.

"Wall, no; not ez I'd go so fur ez that!" exclaimed Hezekiah, hastily. "It's not so much that he's ugly; on'y jes' a leetle spirited. He's wuth any two of the tame 'uns fer giniwine grit, and he's all right s'long's he gits the right sort o' handlin'. I reckon Bill's afeared of him, an' Luce 'ud fin' that out quicker'n spunk. I lay he on'y made out to skeer the boy. Now, with me he's ez kind an' biddable ez a spring lamb; 'cos he knows 't I'm boss. No, Doc, I wouldn't allow to sell Luce; I'd ruther give him a spell o' work, an' I guess that'd fetch him down to common sense. He aint no ways grouty, an' I've been thinkin' some o' ridin' him myself, 'cept I don't see ez I kin spare the time. Ef that Bill wa'n't sech a all-fired coward, he might have a heap o' fun!" And the inward chuckle was again heard, while comical dry wrinkles showed themselves about the corners of Hezekiah's eyes.

During the course of this conversation the Doctor had tied Doll; and Hezekiah, placidly seated upon the porch steps, had set himself to chewing a wisp of straw.

The Doctor, knowing the delight that is extracted

by the Yankee from this native hasheesh, left Hezekiah to the enjoyments of rumination, while he pointed out to Huntingford from where they stood the beauties of the place.

When these were exhausted, he said, "Now, Hezekiah, let us look at the horses."

The loose-jointed giant, rising leisurely to his feet, preceded them to the stable.

The Doctor's horses were a choice lot that any lover of horse flesh must have admired. They were all blooded stock; most of them part Morgan, but entirely free from the fatal taint of spavin so common in this breed. The fact is that though the true Morgans are among the most beautiful horses in the world, they are prone to that disorder; and it is fortunate for New England horsemen that while the greater part of their finer stock is classed under this family name, the defects transmitted from the original Morgan have been pretty thoroughly eliminated by a long course of in-breeding with "Messenger" and "Bell Founder" blood; and this course has produced some of the best road horses to be found the world over. All of which facts were scientifically discussed, with mutual satisfaction, by the three men as they went from stall to stall, dwelling with the delight of amateurs on this or that point of each horse in turn. Finally, in the last stall, they came upon a superb animal, who whinnied as they drew near, and regarded them out of the corner of his eye. He was jet black, with a coat as glossy as satin.

"There," said the Doctor; "what do you think of him?"

"Magnificent!" ejaculated Huntingford.

"Is he not? That is my pet horse, Mr. Huntingford, and in spite of the bad reputation Hezekiah gives him I would not exchange him for any two of the other horses in the stable."

Here Hezekiah interposed:

"Now Doc; fair's fair! I never said he war a bad hoss—on'y a leetle frisky. Why, didn't I allow he wuz ez gentle ez a kitten with me? Jes' look a-here now!" And going to the horse's head, he patted the beast, who affectionately bowed to the caress.

"Thar; d'ye see that! Didn't I say so. Why, he's kinder 'n one o' them Jersey cows in the pastur' out yander—'cept that fool of a Bill's skeert of him, an' he knows it mighty well."

Huntingford was extravagant in his admiration of the noble beast.

"Yes," assented the Doctor; he hasn't many equals in the State. Lucifer is Doll's noblest son, and has all her gentleness and grit added to the qualities of his sire, a blooded Kentucky hunter. Under the saddle he can't be beaten. Would you like to try him, Mr. Huntingford?"

"I never felt a greater temptation," Huntingford exclaimed.

"Very well; he is at your service as long as you remain in the country. I presume you are a good rider; for if you were not, I should feel some hesitancy about committing you to the care of

Lucifer in his present condition. Not that there's anything vicious in him," the Doctor hastened to add; "I rode him myself until lately, when I found that I was growing a little stiff in the joints for a horse of his gait and stamina."

The young man eagerly asserted that he was a constant rider and felt himself able to manage any animal on four legs. "But," he added, "I fear you are too generous, Doctor, and I should feel some delicacy about accepting an offer so evidently prompted by my enthusiasm."

"Tut, tut," answered the old gentleman; "that is all nonsense! I have intended all along to offer you the pick of the stable, and if you like Lucifer the exercise you can give him will be the best thing in the world for him. However, there are other good saddle horses here, and you are at liberty to choose."

But Huntingford insisted that Lucifer pleased him most, and the Doctor, commending his choice, said: "You see, Lucifer is the most carefully trained horse I own. I raised him and had an expert to break him, for May's special use. But he proved too much of a horse for her, and I had to give her a somewhat quieter one. She christened him herself the first time she rode him, and pleaded hard to keep him; but I was more timid than she, and persuaded her to take another. Lucifer, however, has not forgotten his former mistress, and there is a fine scene of reunion every time I bring her with me to the farm."

What subtle quality it may have been that from

this moment endowed the black horse with a deeper interest in Huntingford's eyes we leave for those skilled in such matters to determine; for these are profound questions beyond the ken of an ordinary novel writer.

It was finally settled that Huntingford should consider Lucifer as his own for the time being, and the Doctor told Hezekiah to bring the horse into town the next morning.

They spent a half-hour more in looking over the nearer fields with their growing crops, and in examining the various conveniences of this model stock-farm, which was the pride of Doctor Wayne's heart; and then returning to the carriage, started to drive away.

Before they were half way out of the lane, however, they heard a voice, calling—"Hello, Doc!"

Looking back they saw Hezekiah running after them, hatless and excited.

The Doctor promptly reined in, and in a few moments the Yankee, panting from his unwonted efforts, caught up with them; and looking somewhat silly, asked between his gasps, but with a visible attempt at nonchalance——

"I 'spose ye ain't seen nothin' o' J'rusha—leastways Miss Waithe—lately, have you!"

"Oh, yes," the Doctor responded kindly; "I see her nearly every day."

"Do tell!" said Hezekiah; and then, with an effort, "I ain't been over for quite a spell, but I was considerin' as I'd drop down that-a-way come a Sunday."

“Very well, Hezekiah; if I see her I will tell her;” and as Hezekiah appeared to have nothing more to say, the Doctor started Doll once more, remarking to Huntingford, as soon as they were out of hearing, “An affair of the heart in which I am deeply interested.”

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## CHAPTER VI.

### OUT OF THE HURLY-BURLY.

Out of the hurly-burly of the day into the quiet of the evening, with all the rush and noise of the day-time stilled.

The country folk who came to town during the day to buy provisions, clothing, or finery; to sell garden truck, to “swap” horses, or simply to see the sights—for Adairsville was “esteemed considerable of a place” among them—had long ago grown weary, hitched up their teams, and jogged off homeward. In every thrifty household supper had been eaten, and the dishes washed and put away. The cows that were driven to pasture in the morning were home again, placidly chewing their cuds as they lay at rest.

From time to time the sound of footsteps came from some hasty passer tramping over the plank walk in front of the hotel; but when his feet struck the graveled path on either side, the noise ceased and quiet reigned again. Even the river,

that during the day had rippled on merrily enough, seemed to have hushed its murmuring, and crept noiselessly by, as if in fear of wakening the tired mills asleep on its banks.

Out of the hurly-burly, in very truth, it was for Mr. Huntingford, who, strolling with the Doctor toward Miss Larned's home, breathed in with the cool evening air something of the silence and peace which filled it. His satisfaction and contentment were in nowise lessened by the probability that he should soon see the beautiful face and hear the soft, sweet voice that had been the subjects of his thoughts throughout the day.

Upon the veranda of Mr. Valmont's house they found Miss Larned and Miss Waithe.

"Good-evening, Doctor and Mr. Huntingford," cried the young girl, coming forward and offering her hand to each in turn. "We supposed that we had lost you—Miss Waithe and I; but let me introduce you to Miss Waithe, Mr. Huntingford. The fame of good deeds travels. You may be sure that Miss Waithe has heard all about your adventure. We were just talking of you, and wondering if you had left the village."

"You would not have me believe, Miss Larned, that the exploit was really worthy of your thoughts! I shall soon begin to think that I have been a hero unaware, hearing so much praise from your fair lips."

This reply was well enough in its way, and quite the thing if heard only by the ears for which it was intended; but he felt conscious that

under the circumstances it sounded dreadfully strained.

But the Doctor came quickly to the rescue :

"That was very well done, Mr. Huntingford. I used to talk like that when I was younger."

"You haven't quite left it off yet, Doctor, I assure you," cried Miss Larned, gaily.

"No? Well, perhaps not. You ought to know, May. If anyone could make me talk young, you would.

They seated themselves, and Huntingford soon found himself chatting as an old acquaintance with the bright young girl, while the Doctor now and then interjected some witty remark that set them both laughing, and Miss Waithe sat in starched frigidity, withholding even her passive approval from converse so uninteresting.

In the midst of their merry talk, the noise of wheels was heard, and a span of spirited horses drawing a light buggy dashed into the drive.

In a moment Mr. Valmont drew up beside the veranda, and alighting, gave the horses into the care of the stable-man, who led them away.

"Good-evening May and Doctor Wayne," he said serenely.

The young lady introduced Mr. Huntingford.

"Happy to meet you, sir. On a vacation from the city, I presume? You will be able to appreciate our country quiet, although it sometimes palls upon us." He left the other little time for reply; and after a few formal sentences, he excused himself and disappeared into the house, whither Miss



Waithe had preceded him, to superintend the preparation of his supper.

"Shall you stay long in the neighborhood?"

The sound of the girl's voice startled Huntingford from a brief revery in which he had been endeavoring to fix upon some trait that might serve as a clew, more or less blind, to Mr. Valmont's character.

The Doctor was first with an answer to the question: "Yes; I find that Mr. Huntingford is a member of a firm in New York whose founders were all intimate friends of mine. I have invited him to make my house his home as long as he likes."

"And I have accepted," said Huntingford, inclining toward the Doctor. "And if I stay as long as I like, it will be a very long time. It is a delightful escape from the worry of business."

"But I fear you will find its sameness monotonous, as Mr. Valmont suggested; and that you will be glad to get away from it," Miss Larned suggested.

"It will be a long time till then; and I promise you fair warning before I leave. You do not find it monotonous—why should I?"

"But I do—a little"—slowly, as if compelled to make the admission.

"Yes," the doctor said, in explanation; "you see, Mr. Huntingford, the society of the village matrons, the sewing-bees and Sunday-school concerts, are a poor substitute for city gayeties; although well enough in their way."

The old man turned expectant of Miss Larned's answer, hoping that it might suggest the cause of the weariness and apathy that he had lately noticed in her manner.

He succeeded better than he expected. The cool manner of her stepfather had appeared to her more repellant than ever this evening. And marking this, the air of reserve and gloom that pervaded her home, despite her most persistent efforts to drive it away, seemed more than ever chilling. Then, too, the Doctor's life, full of kindness and help for others, may have appeared in stronger contrast with what seemed to her the cold, selfish existence of her guardian, and with her own ineffectual life.

Perhaps—but who can fathom the depths of the feminine mind with any degree of confidence in the trustworthiness of the results?

“Yes; I think it must be monotonous—or something,” she answered. “Yet I do not know that it is the monotony of it that impresses me—I think it must be the ‘something,’” she continued, somewhat dreamily, ending with a short, unmerry laugh.

“I think I catch your meaning,” said Huntingford, thoughtfully. “Mr. Valmont must be away from home much of the time.”

“And even when he is at home,” the girl added, “he is so much occupied with his affairs and mine that he has no time to listen to small talk.”

“And is all your conversation small talk?” Huntingford asked.

"Of course," said the Doctor. "Whoever heard of a country girl talking anything but gossip!"

"You are not flattering, Doctor," Miss Larned returned; "though my conversation, at the best, can be but little better than gossip. I think there must be something in the atmosphere of the country that robs every effort of mine, however promising I think it, of all savor. You should see Miss Waithe sometimes, when I permit myself to indulge in flights of fancy."

Huntingford laughed. "I can imagine that face might be capable of much expression of a severe and stony sort."

"Hush!" Miss Larned interrupted—"I hear the rustle of her wings. She would not appreciate a conversation at her expense."

Valmont and Miss Waithe were returning. As they stepped upon the veranda, the gentleman turned to his companion, and with a seeming deference that was dear to her heart, said: "As usual, Miss Waithe, I find your judgment better than my own. We will put our guest into the corner room." Then, to Miss Larned, "I have just received a letter that gives me much pleasure, in that it informs me of the intended visit of a young gentleman who will relieve the dullness of our existence."

"Do you think it dull, sir?" she asked, in some surprise.

"For myself, no," he answered, with a faint effort at a laugh. "But I was thinking of you."

"Of me?" she asked quickly, and her surprise increased.

Huntingford was too busy with his thoughts to notice her evident astonishment; for he did not relish the idea that a stranger was coming who might disarrange his plans.

But the Doctor responded: "Yes," he said, "that will be agreeable to May, I am sure. You and I, Valmont, are old fogies, and not very interesting to young people."

To this Valmont assented in his usual impassive manner, not countenancing any attempt at lightness of conversation. But beneath his serenity lay an instinctive distrust of the Doctor, that had suddenly grown to suspicion and fear, since the visit of the Patriarch had brought him to a realizing sense of the dangers surrounding him.

"But you have not told us anything about this stranger," said Miss Larned, somewhat ashamed of the surprise she had shown. "Is he rich or poor? 'An' what's his name an' whaur's his hame?'"

"He is rich, I believe; and, if reports be true, a man of great ability. In short, he is Mr. Grip-leigh, of the firm of Snowden & Gripeigh, brokers, Wall street, New York City."

"Does he talk?" Miss Larned asked.

"As he is a broker," said the Doctor, "it is but fair to the calling to assume that he can if he will."

At the mention of the stranger's name, Mr.

Huntingford, in his turn, was disagreeably surprised. He knew Mr. Gripeigh by reputation; had heard much about his sharpness and thrift, and very little to indicate that he would be a desirable acquaintance for Miss Larned; but he wisely held his peace. Whether Mr. Gripeigh knew him or not was a question that might be of serious moment to him and his plans; but that question could be answered only after the gentleman had arrived and they had met.

“When Mr. Gripeigh comes, you will have someone to accompany you on your excursions about the country, as I understand that he seeks recreation in riding, at such times as he can snatch for the worship of Hermes, his patron deity.”

The Doctor asked, in a quiet, joking way that veiled the pointedness of the inquiry, whether the stranger, taking his business into consideration, worshipped the two-sided divinity as god of theft or as god of trade. To which question he received the matter-of-fact reply that all Mr. Valmont's friends were strictly upright and honorable.

But by this conversation the young people were left to themselves—an arrangement that was in every way satisfactory, to one of them at least.

“The Doctor took me to his stock-farm this morning,” the young man said, by way of changing the subject.

“And you found the drive very pleasant, did

you not? I always enjoy such excursions. The Doctor often takes me. Such drives are almost my only diversion. I know every inch of the way; but with the Doctor to talk to, there seems to be always something new about it."

"I should imagine so," Huntingford assented thoughtfully, as the words brought back to him the conversation of the morning.

"You heard Mr. Valmont's remark about the gentleman who is coming to visit us," said Miss Larned. "After this conversation, I shall have to ride with him if he suggests it. Just fancy cantering through these solitudes, these cool, secluded dells, gazing up in rapt enthusiasm at those majestic mountains, with a companion who is taking notes of the temperature—probably with an eye to purchasing a site for a summer resort—or calculating the motive force of a pretty brook; doing what Miss Waithe" (with a hasty glance to see if that estimable lady was within ear-shot) "calls 'looking at things with a practical eye.' I am very sorry if I do injustice; but I can not help forming opinions of strangers from their friends that I know, and" —She stopped; probably the thought had suggested itself that, as mere acquaintances, they were becoming a shade too confidential even for the country.

But Mr. Huntingford came quickly to the rescue: "You must certainly wrong many people if you always make up your mind beforehand. We all have peculiarities; and in any case there are few that do not feel some thrill of enthusiasm on

finding themselves face to face with the sublime in nature. With a moderate degree of trepidation, I may add that ever since I heard that you like riding I have had it on my tongue's end to ask you if I might be permitted to accompany you, and by doing the best in my power, give you the companionship and protection that seem desirable; but feeling that I am only a common-place mortal——”

“Don't speak in that way, Mr. Huntingford! I was joking. Do you ride, then?” with flattering emphasis. “Come with me, and I'll show you a lovely road.”

Leaving the Doctor and Mr. Valmont in the midst of a political discussion, which Miss Waithe was greedily drinking in, Miss Larned led the way around the corner of the house to the edge of the veranda facing north.

From their feet the land sloped gently down to the river's brink. Yet abruptly enough for them to catch, over tree tops and cottage roofs, glimpses of the moonlit water, where the stream flowed by the mills. But farther away, longer threads of silver were visible, where the river wound its way through meadows and pasture lands from the massive hills rising like a wall beyond.

Not a syllable of conversation was wafted to the two young people from those they had left on the front veranda. No murmur from dwelling or street, nothing but the cry of frogs and crickets, and these sounds seemed to make their isolation only the more complete.

They stood in silence for a time. The girl's eyes were fixed dreamily on the distant hills, and there was a look of sadness in them, made visible by the moonlight shining on her face. Never had Huntingford seen anything so exquisitely beautiful as this face appeared; and gazing at her, he forgot everything—the object of his visit to Adairsville, his plans for her and for himself.

But Miss Larned, soon becoming conscious of the situation, started and blushed when she realized that she was the object of her companion's earnest scrutiny.

She said in haste, "I had nearly forgotten why I invited you here."

Huntingford pulled himself together. "Were you not about to show me something? Did it not refer to some ride we might possibly take together?"

"Yes; that was it." She turned to the landscape at their feet, "You see the threads of silver down yonder?"

"Yes," he answered.

"That is the Wanoto River. It turns those mills by day, and is a dirty, turbid stream. But by night it is as pure and lovely as in those forgotten days when its banks were trodden by a happier, perhaps an honester, people than our own. Along the bank of that river runs a road that is unequalled in beauty by any I have ever seen. And far away yonder, where you see those precipitous hills facing each other, is a wild



ravine. Superstitious people tell strange stories about it ”

“Haunted, is it?” asked Huntingford, looking at her with a smile that was meant to drive away the thought and longing that oppressed him, rather than to ridicule the idea that any place could be haunted; for, under the spell of the hour, he was almost ready to admit such a possibility.

Miss Larned continued softly, almost sadly, as if somewhat disappointed at the tone of Huntingford’s interruption: “Yes; haunted, they say, by the spirit of an Indian woman. In this neighborhood a tribe of Indians used to live. For some reason a quarrel sprang up between them and our pioneers who had penetrated the wilderness almost to their village, and a battle took place. The poor Indians were defeated; and retreating up the river, made a stand yonder between those hills. But many of them were wounded. One, a young chief of the tribe, would have fallen by the roadside had his wife deserted him; but with her help he managed to crawl to the shelter of those rocks. And while her people were defending the narrow way, she watched and tended him, as he was too much hurt to go farther. But the white men were stronger. Climbing the hills, they surrounded the Indians, and few escaped. When the battle was over, they found the faithful wife dead beside her warrior, crushed by a stone that had been rolled down the hill-side. Her spirit still dwells there, they say; and sometimes, when

the air is very quiet, her moans and sighs can be heard away off among the rocks, where she still watches over the dying chief, and waits for their enemies to be driven away."

The girl's voice had fallen to a murmur, that died away into silence as she concluded.

In a moment they heard a step upon the veranda, and the Doctor came round the corner and joined them.

"What can you find so interesting in this moonlight?" he asked; and added slyly, "But I suppose 'it's young folks' ways,' as they say in the play."

"Miss Larned has been telling me a very interesting legend of those hills out yonder," Huntingford answered, ignoring the suggestion of raillery in the Doctor's tone.

"I have heard the story," the Doctor said; "but probably never so well told. It is a tale fit for the moonlight, and you will find the place itself romantic enough to suit you; for of course you are going to visit it."

"Of course I am; and ——" Huntingford hesitated.

"And what?" the Doctor asked.

"If I might presume, on short acquaintance, I should like Miss Larned to show me the way."

"I should not hesitate to ask her, at least, if I were in your place," said the Doctor heartily.

"If you did, I should accept," said the young lady, archly.

"Then we will go, shall we not?" asked Hunt-

ingford, eagerly. "Shall it be to-morrow morning."

"If you like."

"I shall look forward with impatience to the ride," Huntingford responded, with an earnestness so apparent that the Doctor could not repress a satisfied smile; for the old gentleman, not knowing what the coming of Mr. Gripeigh might portend, was well pleased to foster the friendship that he saw growing between his two companions—the young girl, whom he loved better than anyone else on earth, and Mr. Huntingford, who had already won a high place in his regard.

When they returned to the front of the house they found that Mr. Valmont and Miss Waithe had both gone in. This was possibly the reason why neither of them knew of the proposed ride.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### ALONG THE RIVER ROAD.

Wash had Lucifer saddled betimes on the following morning, and Huntingford, looking from the window of his bedroom whither he had retired to dress after an early breakfast, saw the negro leading the impatient black beast up and down the graveled drive. The young man hastened to descend, and found Dr. Wayne with cigar and newspaper upon the veranda.

The horse was brought up to the steps, and Huntingford sprang into the saddle; for looking across the park he espied Miss Larned's horse already at her door. The black steed reared and snorted, and made an ineffectual effort to bolt, but the rider's knees and arm were firm, and Lucifer, quickly recognizing his master, came to a standstill, expressing his eagerness only by pawing the earth and shaking his fine head.

"Take keer ob de critter, Massa Kunnel," the African ejaculated under his breath. "Dat hoss ain't no common trash."

"Never fear, Wash, I'll do my best," laughed Huntingford. Then settling himself firmly in the saddle, with a wave of the hand to the Doctor, he dashed away.

"Golly, don't dey look scrumptious?"

"He has a good seat."

"'Pears like he know what he's about. But he mustn' let him run hisself tired all to once."

Reaching Mr. Valmont's house, the young man found Miss Larned's sorrel, saddled and bridled, at the door, and the young lady sitting on the veranda, ready for the ride. As Huntingford dismounted at the steps, she came to meet him, with the long skirt of her riding habit gathered in her left hand. And very charming she looked in the close-fitting, sober, gray dress, and the soft, gray hat, with its long ostrich feather to match, that jauntily crowned the heavy braids and wavy front of her brown hair. It was a symphony in gray, to which the girl's large, ex-

pressive eyes gave life and brilliancy. Perhaps, if he had encountered it in a bridle-path of Central Park, such a costume would have attracted Huntingford's notice by its novelty, and its contrast with the uniformity of those worn by other ladies; but on this occasion, having no outrageous semi-masculine makeup to compare it with, it struck him only as eminently common sense and fitted to its use, while being, at the same time, enchantingly feminine and pretty.

But there was little time to be spent in admiration of the picture. He assisted Miss Larned to her saddle, remounted Lucifer, and they rode down the drive to the street.

"There's the Doctor, isn't it?" turning to look across the square where the old gentleman was sitting on the piazza of the marble house.

"Yes; I left him there when I came away."

"Good-morning, Doctor," cried May, nodding to him. Then, realizing that her voice could not carry so far, she shook her handkerchief toward him. In a moment they reached the corner, and turning to the left, rode down the slope toward the river.

"There they go, Wash," said the Doctor, as he watched them sinking below the edge of the hill.

"Dey sho'ly do look fine, and da's a fack. Miss Larned a settin' on dat sorrel am de putties' pictur dis old niggah's eyes ebber want to res' on. An' de young Majah, he ain' no jude." Where Washington got this word, it would have puzzled himself to tell; yet he spoke it with all possible

ease and composure, as if dudes were common in his neighborhood, and subjects of his philosophical study.

But the Doctor's face was sad. Where was his enthusiastic youth? It was gone, truly; but was it forgotten? No. The thoughts animating Huntingford's eye, the stir in his blood, were as familiar to the Doctor now, as if he too were nine-and-twenty, and going on such a ride. But the hour for such enjoyments had sped from him, never to return.

Who does not sometimes gaze after his departed youth with sadness and regret? Yet the memory of it remains with us as a consolation, and is sweet:

" Sweet are familiar songs, though music dips  
Her hollow shell in thought's forlornest wells."

Huntingford and Miss Larned were a long distance on their road, and Wash was nodding half asleep in the sun, before the silence on the piazza was again broken.

"Those are young folks' ways,'" the Doctor murmured. "Here, Washington, hitch up Dolly. I will go out to the farm." And in a short time, the brown Morgan was jogging away in that direction.

Meanwhile, the two young people wandered onward side by side; sometimes dashing along, with the cool, damp air of the river fanning their cheeks, and again moving at a soberer pace. Sometimes in the deep shadows cast by the woods that here and there extended from the neighbor-

ing hill-side to the river's bank; at others, under the full glare of the sun, with rich, marshy meadows between them and the river, and rocky pasture land rising abruptly on the other side of the way. The bright green of the grass that carpeted the roadside, and the fresh leaves of the berry-bearing bushes that overgrew the walls and fences, offered a pleasing contrast to the dun, sunparched hill-side farther away. The last of the mills and factories of Adairsville was far behind them, and the noise of the machinery was lost in distance. They caught, now and then, a glimpse of some isolated farm-house nestling among the hills, or of some saw-mill leaning over the water's edge; but other signs of life there were none.

The road was not much frequented. Running beside the river, and following the windings of the stream, it had many turns, and was therefore long; on the other hand, it was level, and pleasant with coolness and shade. On these accounts it was used chiefly by two classes of conveyances, —pleasure wagons and heavily-loaded teams. At this time in the morning, it was too early for the former, while the groaning, rumbling vehicles of the latter sort, when met or overtaken, were soon left far behind. They were alone with each other, and the birds, the trees, and the river.

At many places along their way wild flowers grew in rich profusion, inviting the wayfarer. Huntingford gathered such as struck his companion's fancy, and gave them to her to be made into a bouquet, which, having grown at last to the

right proportions, he had the satisfaction of seeing fastened at her breast.

And the gathering of the flowers served many purposes: it relieved the monotony of continuous riding, rested the horses, occupied the young people, and gave them something to talk about; for the flowers were obstinate and refused to come into any satisfactory combination of color, until Miss Larned, assisted by frequent suggestions from Huntingford, had tried them in almost every possible arrangement. And when finally they were brought into subjection, Huntingford at least, was sorry, although he knew that as a subject of conversation they had been exhausted, and might easily have been dropped some time before. It delighted him to watch her deft fingers weaving and unweaving the rebellious stems; to have her hold the bouquet up for his inspection, as if she were laboring for a result that should please him. The flowers, too, that she lingered over so daintily, were those that he had picked and given her, and this thought was pleasant, although he ridiculed himself for thinking it.

He was not in love, yet he understood fully that fate had made him acquainted with one in whose indefinable charm lay a great danger to his peace of mind. He could not leave her; because in leaving her he must abandon the object he had in coming to Adairsville. He must not love her, must not avow it, if he did, because his motives would not be above suspicion; for when she finally



learned his present plans and purposes, she might have cause to suspect that her fortune had indeed been his main object. He resolved, therefore, that he would keep his thoughts and conversation with her upon the safe plane of friendship, and when he had found out what he came to learn, he would shut his teeth and depart. He already foresaw that that would be no easy task.

Their ride was enjoyable, even if "withering care" sat Huntingford's horse with him; and their conversation was without formality.

They talked of the "hops" that were given every week at some neighboring hotel, either in the village or on the lake road; of the games of tennis that were played on the broad spaces around the common; of picnics, and of boating parties; and Miss Larned promised to initiate Huntingford into all these summer amusements.

They talked of their friends, too, it must be confessed.

"By the way," said Huntingford, interrupting his companion in the midst of a remark about Miss Waithe, "I had the pleasure of meeting an admirer of the lady during my drive with the Doctor yesterday."

"It was Hezekiah. I knew it," she returned, smiling; "if I didn't I could easily have guessed. Did he ask after the health of his J'rushy?" imitating Hezekiah's pronunciation so naively, that Huntingford laughed outright, as he said:

"Hezekiah is quite a character, I should judge."

"And so is our Miss Waithe. But bring them

together, and the effect is marvelous. The Doctor and I have been watching the course of this attachment with interest, wondering how Hezekiah will manage to overcome his bashfulness sufficiently to propose, or, if he ever does that, how Miss Waithe could accept him and be consistent with the tone of her remarks about menfolks in general and 'Hez,' as she familiarly calls him, in particular."

"They will manage it some way, depend upon it," said Huntingford. "The gentleman is not as bashful as he appears, I think; besides, I have heard it hinted that the most matter-of-fact women seldom express their real thoughts of their admirers."

"Do you think that Miss Waithe might be the one to propose?" Miss Larned asked with a laugh.

"Perish the thought!"

"Never mind," the girl continued, "the Doctor himself was ungallant enough to suggest that way out of the difficulty."

"You might mention that idea to her when we return," Huntingford suggested. "Hezekiah will be in the village Sunday night, and with a little outside assistance his fate might be decided."

"Of course he will drop in Sunday night; he always does. But here we are," indicating a place a short distance in advance, where the road forked. "The road to the left runs away between the hills over yonder, to Ironton; I don't know of anything on it that would interest us."

"We might try it anyway, mightn't we?"

Huntingford asked quickly, thinking to prolong the ride, which he feared was now half over.

"I'm afraid it's a little too late to go much farther to-day," she answered abstractedly, looking up through the foliage at the patches of sunlight. "Besides, I should like you to see the Indian Glen we were talking about last evening," she added hesitatingly, and with a shy, quick glance at his face.

The mention of the Indian Glen brought back to him something of the glamour of the previous evening, and he said, "Nothing would suit me better. It is this way, then," and, without waiting for a reply, led the way along the road to the right.

They rode some time in silence, which Huntingford at last broke, by saying, "Mr. Valmont's mine must be in this neighborhood."

"It is only a short distance from the glen. In fact, from a hill-top just beyond one can see the buildings."

After passing the forks of the road the character of their way underwent a marked change. It was now of the roughest description, composed of a bed of loose stones, broken and difficult, with the jagged points of the bed-rock cropping out in places, over which the horses picked their way with caution. In many places it was just a wash with the river, and everywhere, in the smooth, worn stones, bits of driftwood, and dead shrubs, it bore unmistakable traces of having been for long seasons under water. In fact, it was a

part of the river's bottom in the time of high water; for the marks of the overflow could be distinctly seen some distance up the overhanging banks.

There were now no bushes between them and the river, which, contracted to half its general width, they saw hurrying by, dark and swift, but noiseless.

On they went, picking their way over the rattling stones, stopping frequently to take breath and to view the scene, which was becoming thrilling. At such times, the eternal rush of waters, headlong but silent, with wide circling lines of eddies continually coming to the inky surface, had in it that suggestion of mystery and resistless might that brings to sensitive breasts a feeling of foreboding. Miss Larned felt the spell, and even Huntingford looked upon the scene with awe.

The wildness of their surroundings increased with every step. The heads of bowlders began to appear above the surface of the river, and the water, swirling and roaring angrily around them, grew white with foam. The steep hill-side across the torrent began to take on the appearance of a precipice, and drew rapidly near the river's bank; and, directed by Miss Larned, Huntingford saw through the tops of the stunted trees above his head that they were swiftly approaching a mass of earth, equally rugged and precipitous, on their own side of the stream.

"These hills seem bent on mischief—rushing

796706A

together in this way," said Huntingford, with a smile; but showing by the sparkle of his eyes what an effect the scene was having upon him.

"Yes, they seem to be; but it's only bluster; they never get as far as the crash. See; that one over there is already retreating." And so it was. There were again spaces of level ground about the base of the cliff across the water. To their left, in the place of the overhanging ledge of rock, with the ends of shrubs and roots sticking out from the top of it like a fringe, under which they had been passing, they found the bank not nearly so steep, and growing more and more level at every step, until, passing a clump of bushes, the path left the stony margin of the stream, and they rode along a little narrow valley, carpeted with luxurious turf. The river, now a few feet below them, flowed on here placidly enough. The sun shone in pleasantly from a serene sky, while the dense woods, which began at the edge of the little valley and extended up the rocky hill-side, were resonant with the song of birds.

Huntingford had never seen a spot of such wild but entrancing loveliness, and he reined in his horse to take a calmer look around.

"Isn't it lovely?" cried Miss Larned.

"I never saw a scene of half this beauty," Huntingford responded.

"Yet I feel a little disappointed," Miss Larned said.

"Disappointed!" cried Huntingford, with evi-

dent surprise. "I don't see how that can be possible, unless I am to blame. Perhaps I do not show how much I really admire it."

"Not that," she answered hurriedly. "I never saw the valley in this light before. Never so open; so clear and lovely; and that is why I said it disappoints me. I wished you to see it in the light in which I remember it. You will think of it as a spot of sunlight and whispering breezes, and musical with birds. I have always found it in some dark, mysterious mood. The sky up there"—looking upward—"is clear now. But often the clouds come whirling down between the hills in mighty masses, throwing this valley quite in shade. The birds are still then, and the breeze has mournful murmurs in it, as it lingers in the leaves."

As she spoke, some mysterious sympathy between them stirred an echo of her feeling in his breast. The broad expanse of the river took on for him imperceptibly a darker hue; he no longer heard the warbling of birds, but, in its stead, the roar of the rapids, still quite near, though out of sight behind the bend in the road; and, looking up half involuntarily, to see if by chance the clouds also were not plunging down upon them, he saw, far away against the brilliant sky, the wide-spread wings of some lone flying bird, sailing the air, and hovering above them like the spirit of the place watching over its domain.

"I believe it will not be difficult for me to think of it in that light, either," he confessed. "I just

caught myself looking for some of the clouds you were speaking of a moment ago. But would it not rest you to dismount for a moment?"

"Thank you, but I don't think I will. We have still to climb that hill yonder before you can get the view I promised you of the mine buildings. And when we have done that, we shall be a long distance from home."

They rode on side by side a few rods, when Huntingford's attention was attracted by an immense rock that rose abruptly from among the trees, and seemed to hang threateningly over the way.

"I would like to climb to the top of that old chap," he said.

"And you can, if you care to take the trouble. There is the path that leads up," indicating an opening in the bushes.

"But I don't like to leave you here alone," he answered doubtfully.

"Why, there is no one to disturb me, and I could not be lonely in this sort of solitude. I really wish, now, that you would go; there is a grand view from the edge of it that you ought not to miss. But the path is rugged, and that is the reason I have never climbed it."

"Well, here goes for the view, then!" And dismounting, he tied Lucifer to a bush, and disappeared in the pathway.

His companion, left alone, followed his progress by the crackling of the branches and the scraping of *his* feet on the stones, until she saw him emerge

on the edge of the rock above her. For some moments he stood still, gazing about him and drawing into his lungs deep breaths of balsam-laden air, his stalwart figure clearly cut against the sky.

"But what do you see?" Miss Larned cried, looking up.

"See?" he repeated, "everything!" Then, speaking in a subdued but distant voice—"They are fighting that battle over, of which you told me. The woods behind me," pointing away over the surface of the rock, "are full of wounded men. I can see them writhing in the shadows. Others are crouching behind the tree trunks, waiting for a shot; and away off down yonder I can catch glimpses of our pioneers, dodging from shelter to shelter, and drawing near."

"But come down! Come down!" Miss Larned cried, with a laugh in which excitement and anxiety were strangely blended. "You see too much. What a picture he made!" she murmured to herself when she heard him clambering down.

"It was a glorious view," he said, appearing in the path, "and see, I have brought a souvenir—these berries; are they not pretty?"

"No, no! don't touch them; throw them away!" she cried, with a shudder of strong aversion. He threw them aside, much as he would have thrown away any of his possessions if the girl had asked it with that look in her eyes. Then, feeling that she owed him some sort of an explanation, Miss Larned added hastily, "Those berries do not



grow anywhere near here except at this place, and they say that their color is from the blood once spilt over them, and I did not like to see anything so ominous——”

“In my possession?” he asked, completing the sentence, and coming close to her side. As he tried to read her face, his eyes betrayed what had been lying dormant in his mind. Distressed and startled, she turned away her head; and he tore himself from the spell.

“There is more enchantment in the place than I supposed,” said he; “why, I believe I was almost sentimental just then; please pardon me.”

And while he was releasing his horse, Miss Larned tried to recollect what he had said that needed pardon. She remembered vaguely, now that the instant of emotion was over, that she had reached out to push away his hand, which was resting on her horse's neck; and that in doing so, her fingers had touched his. He, too, remembered it, and felt the thrill long after he had mounted his horse, and they were riding on again side-by-side. The memory of that touch, and of the look in her eyes, was so strong upon him that he dared not glance in her direction, fearing that his face would betray him; nor speak, lest his voice, by trembling, should betray his heart. So, in silence they climbed the hill-side, from the top of which Miss Larned pointed out the mine.

Huntingford had many questions to ask about the property, and the road to be followed to reach it from that point.



"Now you'll have to help me up." Page 107.

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language. It is a branch of linguistics which deals with the changes in the English language over time. The study of the history of the English language is important for several reasons. First, it helps us to understand the development of the English language and the factors which have influenced its development. Second, it helps us to understand the relationship between the English language and other languages. Third, it helps us to understand the cultural and social context in which the English language has developed. Fourth, it helps us to understand the role of the English language in the world today. Fifth, it helps us to understand the future of the English language.

His suspicions of Valmont were strengthened when he learned that Miss Larned had visited the mine only once; and finding the grimeness of its surroundings distasteful, had, probably at the suggestion of her guardian, avoided the place ever since.

Then, with a friendship that had flourished like Jonah's gourd, and already bordered on the familiarity of old acquaintance, firmly established, they turned their backs on the mine and all its associations, and began the journey home.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### YOUNG FOLKS' WAYS.

Bright days do not last forever, even in the most favored country. Earth requires a due proportion of rain and storm to maintain in living beauty the green of wood and field, and the thousand hues of the blossoms with which she decks her garments. But with whatever grace the grass, the trees, and the flowers may receive protracted rain, it is certainly distasteful to the animal creation, and especially so to the biped that stands at its head. During such periods, the attractions of the city, pitted against those of the country, come off victorious; for though one may on occasion write very readable verses about the rain, be it acknowledged that such verses are oftenest set

down under the influence of the brightest sunshine and of the cheeriest surroundings.

Huntingford, not being a writer of verses, even under the most inspiring circumstances, was by turns impatient and despairing during the gloomy days that followed his ride with Miss Larned. He spent the forenoon of the first day in roaming restlessly about the library; from the book-shelves to the window and back again, now turning abstractedly the leaves of Burton, Jeremy Taylor, Browne, or some other of Doctor Wayne's quaint collection, and again watching, in a mood scarcely less gloomy than the dismal sky, the dripping trees and the sloppy grass of the lawn; the turbid and swollen gutters on each side of the street; the few moist, miserable-looking pedestrians; and the country teams that, clogged to their axles with viscid mud and drawn by steaming, droop-headed horses, passed on their way in or out of town.

The afternoon was a little better. Through passing rifts in the clouds the blue sky smiled momentarily, and the sun sent occasional flashes that made the wet herbage twinkle with all the colors of the rainbow. Huntingford put on his hat for a walk, and—*mirabile dictu!*—his walk took him toward Mr. Valmont's house. There was no reason why he should have taken that direction; but then, on the other hand, there was no reason for taking the opposite. Having the afternoon before him, he walked slowly, stopping beside the common to watch the robins, which were having a fine feast on the earth-worms attracted

to the surface by the moisture. The bare-footed children paddling in the gutters and shouting uproariously, also amused him; yet he constantly approached the great house near the corner. Presently he found himself passing it, and glancing toward the veranda, was surprised to see Miss Larned sitting there. She was dressed in a pretty gray gown, with a bunch of daisies at her waist. Strangely enough, the girl looked up at the same instant and recognized him with a flashing smile, and as he raised his hat, impulsively started up, as if to run to meet him. But Huntingford motioned her back, calling in a playful tone of authority, "Don't dare to come down here! It's too wet. Wait; I'll come to you."

The girl waited obediently, standing on the edge of the veranda and tapping the floor with one little foot, as the young man approached. There were no steps where she stood; so, taking the hand she reached down to him in greeting, Huntingford said banteringly, "Now you'll have to help me up!"

"Very well," said May with a merry laugh; "perhaps you don't think I am strong enough? See now!" And throwing herself into a graceful attitude, she pulled with all her strength. Huntingford, after a cunning momentary resistance, sprang up beside her, crying, "Bravo! You have lifted me clear off my feet." Then they both laughed, as if it were the best of jokes.

"Miss Larned," said Huntingford, looking down at her, after the merriment had subsided,

"you must be an enchantress. I declare on honor this is the first time I have laughed to-day, and before I saw you standing here, I had about given up all hopes of ever smiling again."

"Why, has anything happened?" she asked, with an inflection of concern in her voice.

"Happened!" ejaculated the young man in a comical tone of despair. "Don't mock me, Miss Larned! it is too pitiful. I'd have welcomed a cyclone or an earthquake, or any other form of mild excitement that would have relieved the clammy, dripping monotony of this morning. Doctor Wayne has been away all day helping Doctor Fink with some serious operation; Mrs. Fink has been baking, I believe, and the children are at school. I came out because I feared an attack of melancholy madness."

"Ha—ha—ha!" rippled the girl's light laugh. "And this is the gentleman that only two days ago so enthusiastically praised our country quiet."

"'One foot on sea and one on shore;  
To one thing constant never!'"

quoted Huntingford with a humorous sigh. "I admit the whole dreadful charge, Miss Larned; but I know you'll overlook my brief lapse, when I tell you that my heresy of this morning is recanted, and that I am now ready to reaffirm all I said the other evening—amended and improved by the author, with copious notes and a thorough index."

"Consistency, thou art a jewel!" quoted the

girl in return. "But I suppose I must forgive you, since I, who am used to it, found the day intolerably dull. But let us sit down; and she led the way to the chairs.

Presently their conversation reverted to the ride of the previous day, and Huntingford asked whether Miss Larned had not been tired by it. But the girl asserted that she had felt only good effects from it. Then, Huntingford suggested, it would be wise to repeat the experience; and Miss Larned answered that he would find her eager for it at any time.

"I see," said the young man, glancing down at the bunch of daisies, "that you have kept some of the flowers."

"Yes," May assented, "aren't they pretty? I tried to keep the whole bouquet, but the rest were too badly withered to revive. But I think I like the daisies best, anyway. It is sheer heresy to say so, for all the farmers are up in arms against them; but they are so pure and simple and innocent-looking that I can't regard them as weeds."

The girl's face was turned to Huntingford, as she said this, and there was in it an expression so gentle and earnest that the young man would have given much for sufficient courage to tell her that his heart likened her to the flower she described; but he sighed inaudibly and forebore.

Thus talking, lightly and on trivial subjects at times, and at others drawing perilously close



to the borders of sentiment, an hour sped quickly. They would probably have passed the entire afternoon in the same delightful occupation had not a sudden darkening of the air and an angry dash of rain interrupted it.

"There!" exclaimed Miss Larned, springing to her feet, "I knew it. It never rains here but it pours. I suppose it will keep on this way for a week."

"Well, I shan't mind much if it does," said Huntingford, also rising, "if—" he hesitated. Miss Larned looked up inquiringly, and he continued, with a feeling of alternate flushing and chilling unwarranted by the commonplace remark—"If you'll take pity on me again, and let me come over to you once in awhile."

"Unless you want me to think t'at one experience has been enough, you certainly will do so—often," she said with insistence. "Then, as Huntingford, buttoned his coat up to his throat, preparing to leave, she exclaimed, "Surely you are not thinking of going now! Come inside until the shower is over."

Huntingford longed to consent, though he knew the "shower" would last the day out; but manfully resisting his desire, said that he must leave, as he might be useful to the Doctor when the old gentleman returned.

Miss Larned insisting no more, answered that he must at least take an umbrella, and Huntingford waited while she fetched one, foreseeing a pretext for a future call.

"I will take it," said he, when she returned, "on one condition."

"Which is?"—asked May.

"That one of those daisies goes with it."

The girl blushed faintly, but said, "Certainly, if you wish it, even though they are only weeds in Adairsville." And as she handed him the flower, Huntingford experienced a vague sense of disappointment, in the fact that it had been accorded so willingly. But she pinned it to his coat herself, and his disappointment was forgotten before she gave him her hand in farewell. When he reached the street he looked back, and May, still standing on the piazza, waved him a gay good-by ere she entered the house.

Just here we feel impelled by a stern sense of duty to make a confession somewhat damaging to the reputation of our young people for candor. Still, it is true and must be told, that the impulse to walk had occurred to Huntingford only when from the library window he saw Miss Larned come out upon the veranda; and that, innocent as that demure young lady had seemed, she saw Huntingford the moment he left the Doctor's house, and fully divined the objective point of his stroll. But we must not criticise them too severely; for these, as the old Doctor would have said, are "young folks' ways."

The rain continued, with few intermissions, during that night and the forenoon of the next day; but toward three o'clock there was a pause in the down-pour; and then Huntingford went over

to return the umbrella. It did not require much urging from Miss Larned to induce him to sit down for another little chat; and while they were talking, they saw two young ladies, in gossamer waterproofs coming toward them up the graveled walk.

As soon as May caught sight of them, she exclaimed: "Why, there come Miss Alma and Miss Weatherbee, from the hotel. I am so glad you are here to meet them. They are two very pleasant girls." Then raising her voice, she greeted the newcomers:

"Now this is real good of you! I've been thinking all day of going over to visit you; but it has been too rainy."

She ran to the foot of the steps, and the three exchanged greetings. Then they all came upon the veranda, and Mr. Huntingford was introduced.

Miss Alma was a tall blonde, with blue eyes and golden red hair, stately, and quiet in her manner, while Miss Weatherbee was a lively, laughing young woman, with black hair and dark eyes. They had come over with the purpose of asking Miss Larned to play ten pins with them the next day, as there was a good alley for the game above the stables belonging to the hotel, and they were pleased to include Mr. Huntingford in the invitation.

The young people spent the afternoon together very pleasantly, and before they separated had reached a footing of easy good-fellowship.

When the time came for the young ladies to leave Miss Larned's house, Huntingford offered his escort, and walked with them to the hotel, and it may be guessed that after his experience of the last two days, he no longer dreaded the dullness of a rainy week in the country.

The game or games—for there were several—of ten-pins which this well-assorted quartette played on the next afternoon, proved a great success. To be sure, the play of the ladies, considered from an expert's point of view, was very faulty; but there is a subtle something in the feminine make-up that enables women to do everything, in a certain sense, well. Let them do anything requiring motion, and though they may set about it in defiance of all rules, they will still be graceful; whereas a man, similarly handicapped, will be merely awkward. Anyone who has ever watched a woman throwing a stone can appreciate the justice of this observation; for, though he may prefer to stand in the direct intended line of the missile, he can not but admire the grace of the action, even if its results lie beyond prophesying.

Miss Alma, whom fate consigned to Huntingford as partner in the game, played better than the other girls; and the young man found himself hard beset to prevent his side from maintaining a too constant advantage over the other; and if he retained the smallest residue of conscience, it must have reproached him severely that night on account of his duplicity; for much of his bowling was, as Miss Weatherbee frankly remarked,

"simply atrocious." Every time he sent a ball thundering harmlessly down either gutter, however, his young companions laughed so heartily at his discomfiture that he found the temptation to renew the merriment too great to resist.

When at last the girls admitted that they were tired, it would have been difficult to find a prettier trio. Their eyes shone from excitement, their cheeks were flushed with a fine rich color of health, and little wisps of hair, loosened by their exertions, hung gracefully over their foreheads and about their necks; and though there was among them much fluttering concern for their "frightful dishevelment," Huntingford assured them that their appearance could not be improved.

Of course he promised to come over to the hotel often; of course he promised to play tennis with them as soon as the weather would permit; and of course he escorted Miss Larned to her home; and still more emphatically, *of course*, he reflected, as he was returning to Doctor Wayne's house, that though the two city girls were charming in many ways, Miss Larned was "queen among them a'."

By Thursday morning the skies were clear, and they, in common with the bloom and verdure of the earth, shone all the fairer for their temporary period of gloom. The sun came forth unclouded and serene, and before noon had dried the leaves, so that the most restless thrush could not shake from them a drop of water; and the turf, so that it

would not damp the thinnest slipper on the liveliest foot.

Then did the girls remind Huntingford of his promise to play tennis, and then were played in the open place about the square half a dozen sets of that delightful game. Huntingford had, by this time, been made acquainted with the nine or ten summer boarders at the Adairsville hotel; and they all came out to see the playing, and to act in concert the part of gratuitous umpires.

The young ladies were more skilled with the tennis racket than with the skittle ball, and the two city girls were quite evenly matched against May and Mr. Huntingford, who played on the opposite side of the net. But the young man was a practiced player, and found more than one opportunity for advising his partner on this or that point; opportunities that he improved to their mutual satisfaction. So the light ball flew from court to court across the net, and the girls worked themselves into a fine state of prettiness and enthusiasm, as they kept it in play, calling out now, "thirty all," or "advantage in," and again "fifteen—love" or "love—fifteen;" or, with a shout of gleeful triumph, "game!"

They did not stop playing until the sun had set; and then, when everyone had gone home, and Huntingford was returning from Mr. Valmont's door, he sighed regretfully to think that the rainy days were over, with all their careless pleasure, and on the morrow he must once more take up his unpleasant task.

The rain, even if it had not given such happy opportunities for becoming better acquainted with Miss Larned, would not have been wholly without compensations. It kept Mr. Gripeigh in New York; and the more Huntingford considered that gentleman's intended visit, the less it pleased him. There were several reasons why it seemed to him inopportune; and though he assured himself that the most important of these was that it might interfere with the success of his mission, the more personal and private reflection that the expected visitor would be thrown constantly in Miss Larned's way, was not without its due influence on the young man's conclusions; for these also are "young folks' ways."

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## CHAPTER IX.

### STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER.

The people of Adairsville, considering themselves almost "city folks," were not very early risers; and when Huntingford started for his ride to the mine on Saturday morning, the stores and shops had not yet been opened. But the mills down by the river's side were already noisy with the shrill buzz of saws and the clatter of wheels.

Though the day promised to be warm, the cool morning breeze was still stirring when the young man crossed the river; and he urged Lucifer into

a gallop that soon took him out of sight and hearing of the town.

During the swift ride of the first few miles he had little leisure for reflection; but when, on reaching the rougher part of the road, he was forced to take a slower pace, his thoughts ran back over the incidents of the last few days, and he felt impelled to ask himself seriously if he was falling in love. The question had, indeed, occurred to him before; but under the direct influence of the pathetic brown eyes he easily put the problem by. Now, also, as he thought of Miss Larned, there rushed back upon his mind a vision of pouting lips, ever tempting, and drooping lashes, ever lifting to bewitch him; but, with an impatient gesture, he tried to drive it away. He spoke sharply to Lucifer, also, thinking to out-ride it; but whoever yet outran his shadow?

Presently he fell to soliloquizing.

"I never thought myself such an idiot. To be sure she is beautiful, angelic, if one must be romantic; but I have met beautiful women before, and I can't remember having played 'Bully Bottom' to any other Titania. Confound it! why must a man always lose his head in a moon-calf fever, just when he has most need of calm reason? A fine spectacle I should make, falling in love with Miss Larned. Suppose I should say to her, like some addle-brained hero in a schoolgirl novel, 'Miss Larned, you are a rich heiress, and I am a poor junior partner; but I love you so obliviously that your money doesn't make any



difference to me.' Well, I *am* a fool!" and with this frank exclamation, he bade the troublesome phantom down.

He made an effort to tie down his thoughts to the business before him, and like Ulysses after lashing himself to the mast, ordered Duty to "roar a lusty stave," and so drown the voice of the Siren. He tried to devise a course of action, and as a schoolboy who whistles to keep his courage up, uttered his thoughts aloud.

"Probably I shall reach the mine before Valmont; as Miss Larned"—behold Banquo re-arisen at the beginning of the feast—"says he always takes the carriage road on the other side of the river; and that, she says"—what! again! Down! down! perturbed spirit!—"is much longer than this one. Well, if I am ahead of him, I will construe his invitation liberally, and make the best of the opportunity. What strange combinations one sees; there is Miss Larned,"—more persistent that Banquo is this phantom!—"a gentle, innocent girl, to all intents and purposes the daughter of this Valmont, who, if I read him aright, is a cold, crafty, scheming hypocrite. I wonder what grim irony of Fate ever placed such a lamb as Miss Larned in the care of a wolf like Valmont. Oh, damn Valmont, anyway!" And with this hearty if improper ejaculation, the resolute man of business banished from his mind the distasteful subject, and put with all speed toward the Siren-haunted isles.

For he had now reached the Indian Glen, and the

incidents of his former visit hither filled his mind. His very hand thrilled again with the light touch of Miss Larned's fingers, and his heart throbbed with the memory of her anxiety for him. Strange—strange disease—this love; that, like measles, whooping-cough, and scarlet-fever, is a necessary incident in our progress toward full and perfect manhood. Unmistakably, Huntingford was in love, though he would have repelled with great indignation the surmise; for this also is a characteristic symptom of the malady—that its victims, during its first stages, refuse to believe themselves infected. Is it then, indeed, as some philosophers assure us, a veritable lunacy; or may it have the nature of consumption—most deceptive and most fatal of afflictions?

Still protesting against his heart, and still calmly rejoicing to feel his protests mere rhetoric, Huntingford approached the neighborhood of the mine. The valley in which it is situated is a romantic one. Hemmed in by hills broken only at the gaps through which the Wanoto forces its way in at one extremity and out at the other, it is completely shut off from the surrounding country. The hill-sides, as Huntingford saw them, were heavily timbered, though here and there the irreverent hand of the wood-chopper had sacrificed large numbers of their fine trees to the demands of the railroad which had stolen access to the mine along the course of the river.

The Wanoto Mines open directly into the bluffs from the levels which probably, ages ago, formed

a part of the bed of the now shrunken river. And on these levels, along both sides of the stream, are situated the ore-platforms, blast-furnaces, storehouses, machine-shops, and other structures pertaining to the business of the Wanoto Mining Company. On the hither bank, at the entrance to the broad iron bridge that crosses the river, stands a neat stone building, over the door-way of which is a large gilt sign, bearing the title of the corporation and the word "Office." On the opposite bank Huntingford noticed the cupolas of four blast-furnaces, of which two were in operation—spurting up against their immense iron caps streams of bluish-white sulphurous flames; and before the mouth of the shaft, a wooden shed, snorting alternately, from great iron nostrils, regularly intermitted puffs of white vapor, gave evidence that the ore-cars were on their journey to and from the bowels of the earth. Farther down stream, a jagged ridge of slag and cinders banked the river for some distance. On the many side-tracks of the railway, "gondola" cars, some empty, some laden with coal, and others with crude ore or with pig iron, stood in confusion here and there; and the broad wooden platforms beside the tracks were heaped with ore; while soot, cinders, and desolation lay over everything.

Huntingford dismounted and tied Lucifer, who was made uneasy by the roaring and puffing of furnaces and engines. Over the bridge entrance he noticed a conspicuous sign, which prohibited

trespassing, and directed all persons having business in the locality to apply in the office, where passes might be obtained by those entitled to the privilege of crossing the bridge. Into the office he accordingly went, and addressing himself to a pale-faced youth whom he saw bending over the pages of an immense ledger, inquired, as a matter of form, for Mr Valmont.

To him, in reply, the industrious penman, after a period of dignified obliviousness, glancing through the wires of his cage——

“Not in!” Then he relapsed into the struggle with pen and ledger.

To whom Huntingford, approaching close to the pigeon-hole of the cage that held the industrious youth——

“Can you tell me when Mr. Valmont will arrive?”

Another period of absent-mindedness on the part of the caged dignitary, followed by the laconic answer:

“‘Leven o’clock!’” and the ledger again absorbed him.

But Huntingford was not a man to be put from his purpose by any ostentation of clerical inaccessibility; and therefore, after a moment’s pause, he once more interrupted the labors of the high and mighty ruler of account books:

“Who is in authority here during Mr. Valmont’s absence?”

Another pause, more marked than those preceding, followed by an answer yet more laconic:

“Superintendent!”

"Is he in?" Thus Huntingford. The only response was a tap on a call-bell, pilfering scarcely the tenth part of a second from the exacting ledger.

Instantly a small boy, evoked as by enchantment from the inner spaces, entered; and to him the arbiter of accounts, without interrupting his occupation, said:

"Show this gentleman in to Mr. Brown!"

And enter Huntingford, through numerous railings and inner railings, doors and inner doors, to the very audience chamber of the institution.

Here the diminutive Mercury, with the brief parting information, "That's him," left Huntingford to make his presence and wishes known to the superintendent, who, not perceiving the visitor, kept on busily writing.

Huntingford did, however, at last succeed in attracting the superintendent's attention. He found Mr. Brown pleasant and obliging, and after a brief explanation secured the required pass. The gentleman expressed regret at his inability to accompany Mr. Huntingford, but tapped his bell, and on the entrance of the lad previously introduced, instructed him to act as guide to the visitor, and then bowed the young man out of the office.

As Huntingford, following his small guide, crossed the bridge, he opened conversation by inquiring:

"How is business?"

"No good!" answered the boy, with the easy assurance of one in the confidence of his superiors.

"We're on'y workin' one shift now. See that shed where the steam's comin' out? That's the shaft."

Huntingford inquired how long the two idle furnaces had been "out of blast."

"Ever sence 'way las' summer," he learned.

As to their daily capacity, the youthful *cicerone* should be compelled to seek information of "Abe;" and further inquiry identified "Abe" as the "furnace boss." Were they shipping much ore? "No; not a great sight," answered the boy. "But say, Mister; where you goin'?" as Huntingford was about to enter the engine-house at the mouth of the shaft—"The' aint much to see in there; on'y the injine an' the drums."

"Well, then, we'll look at the engine and the drums," said Huntingford, entering the sweltering shed.

"Oh," responded the lad, reluctantly following; "I thought you'd ruther see the koopalos. Gosh, but they're putty when they're drawin' off a blast!"

"All right, my young man; we'll attend to them by-and-by."

They were now standing beside a large engine, the mighty piston-rod of which moved steadily up and down; while four slender valve stems arose, each in its turn, and snapped back with a snort into its proper "dash-pot." Huntingford was interested by the machinery, and the small boy having, in his desire to impart useful knowledge, already forgotten or forgiven the bad taste that

preferred a mere "injine" to a roaring blast-furnace, endeavored to elucidate matters.

"You see them little rods a-jumpin' up an' down? Well, they jerk the walves open an' shet—you can't see them, cos they're out o' sight; they fotch the steam in an' out o' the biler; an' that works the big piston-rod, bobbin' up an' down. That moves the big beam you see see-sawing up there; an' the beam turns the drums, an' they fotch the cars up an' down the shaft. You see them wire ropes runnin' through the holes yander in the pa'tition?"

Yes; Huntingford saw them.

"Well, they're hitched onto the cars at t' other end; foller me, an' I'll show you!"

And explaining to "Jimmy," the engineer, who at that moment drew near, that they had "a pass from old Brown," and that everything was "all right," he led the way up a flight of stairs and through a small door in the rear of the shed. They now stood upon a long platform that bridged the railroad sidings, and under them were rows of gondola cars waiting to be loaded with ore. To their right, the boy pointed out the wire ropes moving steadily in opposite directions and disappearing over steel bearings in the darkness of the shaft which opened its black mouth in front of them.

"Now you jes' wait a bit, an' you'll see the car comin' out o' that hole." And even while the lad spoke, a small iron car, heaped with ore, on the top of which was perched a grimy "tender,"

merged, and coming upon the platform, stopped directly over one of the cars on the track beneath. The clay-besmeared attendant hereupon bestirred himself. He slid from his perch and loosened a latch at the side of his car; whereupon the bottom of it opened downward, and its contents fell rattling into the gondola below.

Huntingford hurriedly inquired of the boy whether they might go down with the car on its return trip.

"Oh, I guess so; if you aint't skeert o' dirtying yer Sunday-go-to-meetin' clo'es," was the answer. And being reassured upon this point, the small guide hailed the grimy Charon:

"Say, Mike; take us down with you?"

Mike inquired briefly, "Have yez got a p'mit?"

"Course we have! What do you take us fer?" was the answer, delivered with a certain severity of tone. And the bottom of the "hopper" having been readjusted, the two hastily climbed into the dirty vehicle as it began its return journey.

Huntingford watched the circle of light narrowing to smaller and smaller dimensions, as the car ropped lower and lower into the bowels of the earth. The air grew heavy and moist, and the title, smoking, sputtering lamp on Charon's cap threw a doubtful glimmer on damp, clammy walls, as they glided steadily ever down and down.

The place seemed awfully solitary and uncomfortably close, cold, and yet oppressive; and when, far in the depths, they passed and hailed the



ascending car, Huntingford felt relieved by the momentary diversion. But the irrepressible small boy, unconscious of the feeling that oppresses those making their first descent into a mine—a feeling that the solid earth is settling down upon their chests—carried on a professional conversation with the Milesian Charon.

“Workin’ full shift now, Mike?”

And Mike answered, “Sure, there does be twinty av thim in the narth gallery.”

“Anybody workin’ at t’other end?”

“Och, naw! they gev that up near tin wakes ago.”

“How’s Jim gittin’ along—‘Red Jimmy,’ you know, that got hurt so bad last week?”

“Troth, I did hear Big Oike as lives ferninst him—yez moind Big Oike? He did be a tellin’ the marnin’, as he wurr in a bad way, intoirely. Bad cess till thim that brought the harm upon him! An’ such a foine lad he wurr, wid a woife an’ six childer daypindin’ upon him. But glory be to God! he’s a mimber av the Union, an’ the b’ys wull have a care av thim. It’s the blissid thing, it is, that same!”

During the course of the gloomy shaft, Huntingford bethought himself of his predicament in lacking a lamp, without which his errand must be fruitless; and now, slipping a dollar into Mike’s hand, asked if the Irishman could supply the needed article.

Mike, elaborately grateful for the fee, rubbed his miry nose in anxious consideration, until an

idea having been evolved through the agency of this counter-irritation, he sagely observed:

“Barney has a plinty av the same.”

And where might “Barney” be found?

This question elicited the information that Barney was the “Nipper”—or, in untechnical English, the man in charge of extra tools and supplies—and might be found in the tool-shed behind the engine-house. But the loss of time involved in an ascent and second descent of the shaft having been pointed out to him, Mike cogitated further, distributing more evenly the color upon his nose. Presently he reached a more practical suggestion:

“Yez moight take me own, whin I shtart upon me up thrip.”

“Very well, Huntingford assented; “but shan’t you need it yourself?”

“Divil a bit!” responded Mike, “Oi can ride jist as aisy in the dark. If yez’ll shtand ferninst me while the dinkey’s loadin’, Oi’ll lave yez the Davy whin she shtarts. But, if ye plaze sorr, would yez be sure and shtand by whin Oi arroive agin? Not as Oi’ll be nadin’ it, d’ye moind; but the Frinch foreman be’s always foindin’ fault wud this, that, an’ t’other; an’ its the divil’s own row he’d be raisin’ av he’d catch me widout me Davy.”

“How soon shall you need it?” Huntingford inquired.

“Oh, in the loikes av twinty minutes,” answered Mike.

Meanwhile they had reached the foot of the incline, where a number of workmen with safety-lamps upon their caps at once began shoveling the oar into the car. The task required scarcely ten minutes, and when it was nearly finished, Mike said:

"Here, sorr; yez moight jist as lave take the cap wid the Davy antill it; for be the same token, yez 'ud foind some trouble a-fixin' it antill yer own."

"Right you are!" exclaimed Huntingford. "Let us exchange hats then until you return."

Mike made a polite protest, fearing that he should "roile the gintleman's foine hat;" but finally the change was effected, and the car started on its journey back to daylight, while Huntingford and the boy, who knew the ground thoroughly, proceeded along the gloomy passage leading toward the workings.

Presently they came to a place where the main tunnel divided; and Huntingford asked his companion which was the north gallery.

It was the passage leading to the right. To this information the boy added: "You won't see nothin' in there; 'cos Mike says they ain't ben workin' it ever sence way back."

Never mind; they would explore it anyway, if it was not very long. No, it was not very long; but as to exploring it, the boy was not sure that they "dast to." Huntingford, however, would shoulder the responsibility of that; and in they went, leaving to their left the south gallery, in

which they could see the miners at work not far away, looking like gnomes, each with a will-o'-the-wisp set upon his forehead.

The north gallery was not more than one hundred feet long, and they soon reached the end. Here Huntingford carefully examined the rock, breaking off small specimens from various points, and stowing them in his pockets for future examination, to the supreme scorn of his little Mentor, who commented—

“Them ain’t no good! They’s lots a heap puttier, an’ shining jest like gold, in the south gallery. The men call ’em di’mons; but they ain’t. Come on; I’ll show you,” and Huntingford, having completed his errand, answered cheerily:

“All right, my boy; let us see, then, if you can show us anything worth looking at.”

A few dozen steps from the intersection brought them into the midst of the workmen, where the boy lost no time in picking out a handful of brilliant pyrite crystals, which he brought to Huntingford in solemn, condescending triumph, with the sententious remark—

“Now!”

Huntingford busied himself with gathering a fair sample of the ore, when suddenly he was interrupted. He had been so intent upon his task—intending the selection to be fairly representative—that he had not noticed a burly, ill-favored fellow hurrying from the end of the working; but now, raising his eyes, he saw the man, who had just stopped before him.

"Vat eez eet zat you select, sare?" asked the fellow gruffly, speaking with a decided French accent.

"Oh, I'm only gathering a few specimens," answered Huntingford carelessly, turning away to examine the rock further.

The man placed himself in Huntingford's way, and continued:

"But, eet eez not permit. You shall throw zem away!"

"Excuse me; who are you, anyway?" demanded Huntingford, somewhat provoked.

"But, sare; me, I am ze foreman. Zose ore vich you 'ave must be abandon—throw away!" and, as Huntingford showed no intention of obeying, the fellow made a motion to knock them out of his hand.

Huntingford quietly stepped back, and dropped the specimens into his pocket, answering:

"I have a pass from Mr. Brown, and will answer to him or to Mr. Valmont for the minerals."

A vindictive look came into the Frenchman's eyes, as he stepped close to Huntingford again, exclaiming:

"Eet mek no matter for Meestaire Brown; here I am ze boss! Throw down ze rock, sare; or I vill tek zem!"

Huntingford, now thoroughly angered, retorted:

"I have told you that I will answer to your superiors; I will also report you to them. Step aside and let me pass out;" and he made a step

toward the incline, at the foot of which he saw the car just arriving. The burly foreman interposed, and as Huntingford attempted to push by, struck at him.

But thanks to the training of the "Athletic Club," which sends abroad so many physical artists in disguise, the young man was too quick for the assaulter, and in a wink, before that worthy had time for a second thought, he found himself sprawling on the flat of his back, studying an intricate and elaborate plan of the zodiac in the rocky roof.

The young pugilist, nowise gloying in his achievement, but rather vexed that he had allowed himself to be led into the encounter, paid no attention to the complimentary undertone remarks of the miners, who had now stopped work; but, pausing for a moment to see the fallen man show proof of remaining life, by sitting up and dazedly rubbing his eyes, passed on to the car, followed by his open-mouthed and wondering guide.

They found the "dinkey" loaded, and almost ready to ascend; and great was Mike's relief when he recognized his precious cap and "Davy" returning.

"Begorra!" he ejaculated, "I t'ought yez moight av fell in love wid the cap, an' clim out another way!" bursting into a wide-throated guffaw at his own humor.

They were well out of hearing from the foot of the incline ere the boy gave vent to his admiration of Huntingford's prowess.

"Gosh! but didn't you lay Frenchy out?"

"Phat's that yez say, ye young lav'rick? W<sup>ho</sup> laid Frinchy out?" cried Mike, startled ~~in~~ to sudden interest.

"Why, he did!" answered the lad. "Jimi~~ny~~, ye'd oughter see 'im fetch 'im one under the e~~ar~~; an' ye'd jist oughter see Frenchy flop, that's al~~l~~!"

Mike sat for some moments in silence, giv~~ing~~ ing himself time to digest the information in its entirety. Then, turning to Huntingford he ask~~ed~~ ed almost in a whisper:

"Mishter, wud yez mind lettin' me take ~~my~~ yer fist?"

Huntingford, laughing, extended his hand, a~~nd~~ and as Mike gripped it earnestly, inquired,

"What is wrong with him. Don't you l~~ike~~ like him?"

Mike became excited. "Loike him, is it! ~~the~~ the toad-'atin' snake! Loike him, is it! Faith, ~~an'~~ an' if he got nothin' from thim as don't loike h~~im~~ im, sorra a sup but toads wud he ate the rist av ~~this~~ his days; the divil fly away wid him!"

"But what has he done?" persisted Huntin~~g~~g-ford.

"Done, is it! Ivery blissid thing, thin, that a mane toad-'ater cud, the thafe av the world!" Mike answered with growing vehemence. "Ivery mother's son of us in the mine has a grudge agin him for batin' an' the loikes. It wurr t'rough him orderin' Rid Jimmy to work under a rock that ivery lasht man knowed wud fall, that he got kilt intoirely—save by the skin av his tathe—the

saints preserve him!" I'm glad yez paid him up, sorr; an' if iver I can do yez a good turn, by the howly Saint Pathrick, but Mike Maloney's yer b'y for that same! But moind me words, sorr," he added impressively; "yez want to have a care av him; he's a bad one sure, whin he gets a grudge agin any man; an' begob, its yersilf has giv him a big one. The saints bechune yez an' all harm, sorr!"

By this time they had reached the platform at the mouth of the shaft, and Huntingford after bidding Mike good-by, moved off with his companion.

On emerging from the engine-room, Huntingford looked at his watch, and to the lad's disappointment, found the time too late to permit an inspection of the furnaces. This disappointment was somewhat mitigated, however, by means of a round, bright silver dollar, which so overwhelmed the boy that he followed the giver back to the office in silence, that was broken only when he saw Valmont's team standing at the door.

"Jiminy! there's the boss's turnout. I guess he must be goin' som'er's, er the hosses would 'a' been put up."

Huntingford went into the office to pay his respects before leaving.

Mr. Valmont had arrived but a few moments before, and was still in the outer office consulting with the Cerberus of the account books, when Huntingford entered. The conversation was interrupted, and Mr. Valmont, turning, recognized



Huntingford, bade him good-morning, and shook hands without effusion.

"Will you step inside?"

"I thank you, no. It is growing late, and I have already overstaid my time. I came in before leaving, merely to pay my respects, and to express my thanks for Mr. Brown's courtesy."

"Oh! you have been through the yards, then?" asked Valmont, smiling with calm courtesy, but fixing on the young man, after his usual manner, the keen gaze of his steady eyes.

"Yes," answered Huntingford, "I started for my regular ride earlier than usual this morning, and having come this far, recalled your kind invitation, and took advantage of it, with Mr. Brown's permission, to look around."

"Ah!" Valmont returned, still holding his gaze calm and steady; "I am sorry I was not here to show you about. We might have found you a suit of 'overalls' to go down the shaft in, if you care for such things."

Huntingford, conscious that the soilure of his clothing must be apparent to Mr. Valmont, responded no less blandly:

"Thank you; but my curiosity got the better of me; so, finding a car ready to descend, I went down in it."

The light of the steady eyes seemed to flicker a trifle, and the calm lids quivered very slightly; but Valmont returned serenely enough, with a faint smile:

"Then it appears that I have no sins of omission

to reproach myself with. I trust you found the mine interesting, Mr. Huntingford."

"Very," answered the young man. "It was my first venture underground, and I have always been curious on the subject. The trip was not wholly without excitement, either, as I had a little difficulty with one of the foremen, a Frenchman, I believe."

"I regret exceedingly"—Valmont began; but Huntingford continued:

"It was about some specimens I had picked up"—drawing a few of the crystals from his coat-pocket—"which he insisted on my throwing away, though I assured him that I would answer to you for them, and on his attempting to strike me, I regret to say my temper got the better of me, and I knocked him down."

Valmont now completed the interrupted sentence.

"I regret exceedingly, Mr. Huntingford, that you should have received insolence from anyone in my employment; the matter shall be looked into at once. This man Croitier bears a bad reputation, and is said to be capable of any crime when he is under the influence of drink. I have borne with him until the present time, only because of his power over the men. He shall be discharged. But I regret that you have incurred his enmity, for he is desperate and revengeful, and may do you harm."

Huntingford insisted that the man should not be discharged on his account, expressing his con-

fidence that there would be no further trouble; and finally recurring to the specimens in his hand, said:

"Of course, if you wish, Mr. Valmont, I will leave these minerals with you."

But Valmont assured him that there was no objection to his taking as many specimens as he wished; however, the manager would repeat his caution to beware of Croitier. If Mr. Huntingford at any future time should care to revisit the mine, Mr. Valmont would be pleased to drive out with him whenever he found it convenient, and personally show him through the establishment. Would not Mr. Huntingford walk in for a few minutes? No; Mr. Huntingford, looking at his watch, found to his regret, that he must hasten in order to reach Adairsville for luncheon; and so must thank Mr. Valmont once more, and bid him good-morning.

"Say rather, *au revoir*, Mr. Huntingford! Well, if you positively can not come in—though I should be very much pleased—No? Well, then, *au revoir*."

They shook hands and walked to the door, and Valmont stood on the steps while Huntingford unhitched Lucifer and sprang into the saddle.

"Will I put the team up?" asked the stableman, coming up at that moment.

"No; I have to meet the one-thirty train at Iron-ton. Give them some oats and let them stand. Good-morning, Mr. Huntingford; a pleasant ride!" and he turned back into the office, as

Huntingford galloped away with the disquieting conjecture that Mr. Gripeigh would soon be on hand to disturb his calculations—possibly in two quarters.

Meanwhile, Mr. Valmont was asking his book-keeper, "When does Croitier's week end?"

"Monday, sir;" the young man answered, after referring to his books.

"Very good. Tell him I wish to see him, when he comes for his pay." And the manager disappeared in his private office.

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## CHAPTER X.

### HUNTINGFORD POSTS A LETTER.

Doctor Wayne was sitting upon the veranda with book and cigar, when Huntingford, tired, soiled, and heated by his ride and the adventures of the morning, rode into the yard.

"Well, young man," the Doctor said, rising and laying his book aside, "you look as if you'd been having hard work."

"Then my appearance gives trustworthy evidence," Huntingford said languidly, as he sprang to the ground. The fact is, Doctor, my discoveries proved so important that I was eager to consult you about them; and so have let no grass grow under me."

"Very good, Mr. Huntingford; we will go into

the library. Ah, there is Wash"—as the negro came up. "Here, Wash, take Lucifer and rub him down well."

"Now," said the Doctor, taking his favorite chair when they reached the library, "I am at your service; but wait!"—looking the young man over. "You don't appear in very good condition for a talk; hadn't you better freshen up, and have a little dinner before we begin?"

"No, no, doctor!" the young man began—"that is, unless Mrs. Fink is waiting for me."

"No; dinner is not yet ready," said the old gentleman.

"Well, then I'd much rather go on with the business at once; I shall have a better appetite after I get it off my mind."

Huntingford detailed his morning's experiences, not omitting his trouble with Croitier, nor the final conversation with Valmont.

The doctor heard him to the end without interruption, and when the recital was finished, remarked:

"He suspects you already; you will have to be very cautious. Now for the minerals; you brought them with you, of course?"

"Yes," Huntingford said, producing the specimens from the unworked gallery and handing them to his companion. "What do you think of these?"

The doctor turned them over in his hand, and answered almost at once—"Fine hematite, I should say. I am not an expert, but know a

little of mineralogy. I would like to own a bed of this myself."

Huntingford made no comments, but drawing out the specimens that had brought Croitier to grief, handed those also to Doctor Wayne, asking:

"And these?"

"Poor enough!" answered the Doctor, the moment he saw them. "I suppose that a mine yielding only this kind of ore would hardly pay for working. There is a process for reducing it, I understand; but I don't believe it would pay to introduce it up here."

"Exactly my opinion!" returned Huntingford. "But Mr. Valmont appears to have reasons for concluding otherwise; as the hematite deposit has been neglected for months past, while there is a gang of twenty men at work getting out this sulphur-loaded trash."

"Then," the Doctor returned quickly, "the time for surmises is past. Mr. Valmont is ruining the reputation of the mine—for what purpose he knows best. No wonder the cost of production has increased, while the output has fallen off. What do you purpose doing?"

"I have not altogether decided; though I think that I will lay the matter before Mr. Wells, and await instructions from him. Meanwhile I think I will cultivate Mr. Valmont; his double-dealing is so patent that I care little henceforth whether he suspects my motives or not. Anyway, Grip-leigh is expected to-day, and he has seen me

often enough to remember me easily, if his memory is jogged. As for Miss Larned—I scarcely know what to do; the subject is so important to her that it seems to me she ought to be taken into confidence at once. And yet, Doctor”—the young man hesitated and flushed slightly—“well, you see, Doctor,” impulsively—“I’d rather lose my right hand than wound her or lose her friendship, by bearing her unwelcome news. What had we better do? You know her well; while I”—he hesitated and uttered a little nervous laugh—“while I only—like her very much!”

It was a very fatherly look that Doctor Wayne gave Mr. Huntingford when the young man made this half confession; for the old man had read his young companion’s heart like an open book, and he then and there resolved that if the word “deserving” could be found upon the pages of that book, its twin-word—“rewarded”—should be written beside it, if he had the power to write it or influence the writing of it.

But of all these kindly thoughts Huntingford remained in ignorance; for the Doctor, answering his question, merely advised him to write Mr. Wells, as he intended, without delay, and leave the enlightening of Miss Larned until a later time, when all the details of action should have been decided upon. “And meanwhile, my dear friend,” he continued, laying his hand upon the young man’s shoulder, as they arose, “suppose we call on May this evening.”

Huntingford's heart bounded with sudden pleasure at the proposition. He had seen the young lady nearly every day during the past week; but his appetite had only grown by what it fed on, and he longed for a sight of her sweet face and the sound of her gentle voice to drive from his mind the thoughts of treachery and dishonesty that had taken possession of it since morning. He was on the point of assenting to the Doctor's proposal, when it suddenly flashed upon him that under the circumstances he could not honorably visit Mr. Valmont's house; and disappointment was quite apparent in his tones as he answered:

"No, Doctor; I'd like to say yes; but I can't force myself upon Valmont's hospitality while I am secretly working against him. While the results of my investigation were in doubt, it was different; but I can't toast a man with my right hand above the table, while with my left I am feeling about under it to stab him. Besides, I couldn't talk frankly with Miss Larned while I am playing this sneaking double game."

"Nonsense, my dear boy; sheer nonsense! We shouldn't be visiting Valmont, anyway you put it; and, in doing your duty, you are not playing a double game. You'd better go; it will change the current of your thoughts."

But the notion was morbidly fixed in Huntingford's mind; and feeling a martyrlike satisfaction in the renunciation, he determined not to see Miss Larned intentionally until the time came for taking



her fully into confidence. So he absolutely refused to call upon her.

"Very well," said the old Doctor finally, seeing that argument and persuasion were alike futile, "if you feel that way about it, perhaps it is best you should not see her. But I was considering her wishes rather than yours; for I know she will miss you. It is a rare chance that brings May—or me either, I may selfishly add—a companion so congenial. Oh, no thanks, my boy! No thanks!" as Huntingford opened his mouth to respond. "Just make the most of it and say nothing. May has brightened visibly with your companionship, and I regret that anything should interrupt it. And now there goes the bell"—rising from his chair;—"let us go in to dinner; for you must be famishing."

Immediately after dinner, Huntingford wrote Mr. Wells a confidential letter, in which he detailed minutely all the facts of which he had possessed himself concerning Mr. Valmont and the Wanoto Mines, and requested full directions for proceeding in the case. Then he had Lucifer saddled again, and rode over to Ironton. He was by nature cautious, and reflecting that the postmaster of a country village might be inquisitive and given to gossip—he had heard of such cases—he thought it might be well to avoid all possible chances of Valmont's learning of this particular correspondence, and so decided, tired as he was, to post the letter at the railway station.

Chameleons and orchids are said to 'feed on

light and air," but love, gifted with assimilative powers still more subtle, feeds well on things far less material: a word, a tone, a look—even a thought or a dream—may serve it for a hearty meal. So Huntingford, as he rode along in the golden afternoon, drew very substantial aliment for his heart from Doctor Wayne's passing observation concerning the good his friendship had done Miss Larned. He thought, in a high abandonment of self, "If I can but make her life happier for a time—if I can but leave this summer a memory in her heart of pleasant, sunshiny days and kind sympathy—that will be enough to repay me for the thankless task I have undertaken in her behalf; and it may soften her mind toward me in the future, after the first shock of natural bitterness is forgotten. What does it matter what feelings I shall carry away with me? What does it matter though her face and voice will haunt me all my life? It may be perilous to me—this pleasant association; but so long as she can not suffer from it, what does it matter?"

So he soliloquized; but he was not in love—oh, no! He smiled sardonically at the idea.

Put yourself in his place; it is pleasant to any of us to be confidentially assured by an old friend of some surpassingly gentle, agreeable, beautiful, and sweet young girl, that this same epitome of all the feminine graces relishes one's company. One does not need to be in love to appreciate such assurance; certainly not! Well, then, what are we talking about?

Ironton lies directly west of Adairsville, and only about four miles distant. The road is good, and the scenery through which it passes is, at places, very beautiful. At one point, it circles around the foot of a small lake, within sight of a pretty summer hotel situated on its western shore.

Huntingford had reached the station at Ironton in time to drop his letter through the slot in the side of a postal car on the New York express, and was returning leisurely toward Adairsville. As he passed the lake, he took off his hat, and checked Lucifer to a walk, enjoying the cool, fresh breeze from the water. His thoughts were far away; when suddenly a shout of merry laughter, and musical calls of, "Mr. Huntingford! Mr. Huntingford! Oh, Mr. Huntingford!" startled him from his reverie.

He looked in the direction of the voices, and saw a boat, loaded with young women and two or three male protectors, putting in to shore close beside him. The girls were waving their handkerchiefs to him excitedly, and all talking at once. Huntingford stopped his horse, smiled and bowed to the ladies, and as the boat touched land, dismounted and tying Lucifer, went forward to shake hands with each of the party in turn.

A babel of questions was showered upon him.

"Where have you been, this age?" "Were you much hurt?" "Have you been at Adairsville all this time?" "Why haven't you been to see us?"

The young man, with a mock gesture of despair, put his hands to his ears. Then laughing, he said: "Ladies, ladies; one a time, I beg of you!"

"No, no; all together!" cried a pretty girl in white. "He deserves no mercy—oh! you heartless deserter!" shaking her curly head and threatening him with her uplifted finger.

"That is so!" called another. "You are a heartless deserter; poor Miss. Smith has been pining to a shadow about you."

"And only see him! How disgustingly healthy he looks, after all our tears and fasting. Oh, faithless, fickle man!" And the girls laughed merrily again.

"Mrs. Van Dank," said Huntingford, turning appealingly to the matron of the party, "I throw myself on your mercy; of your pity, save me from these Eumenides! In return, I will confide to you all I have done, thought, and been, since I left the hotel."

"The quality of mercy is not strained," quoted Mrs. Van Dank, entering into the spirit of the thing, "and I doubt whether you deserve any; however, girls, if he confesses fully, we'll forgive him, won't we?"

"Don't let us commit ourselves, girls!" cried Miss Smith, the one that had first spoken. "Let us hear his confession first, and see whether he deserves forgiveness."

"You hear them, Mr. Huntingford," said Mrs. Van Dank, seating herself on the grassy bank, and fanning herself with her hat. "I fear you

will have to be contented with the grace they offer, and even that is more than you deserve. Now sit down there on that stone and tell us, first, where you have been."

"In Adairsville," he meekly answered.

Here the girls all cried out together again. "In Adairsville, and he never came over once! Oh, the wicked, heartless monster!"

"Girls! girls!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Dank, imposing silence, "don't interrupt the penitent's confession! Next, Mr. Huntingford, what have you been doing?"

"Important business, I assure you on my honor," but the last clause was drowned by a chorus of "oh's," "ah's," and other exclamations of incredulity.

"Very well," said the young man; "if you're not going to believe me on my word of honor, you shall all die in ignorance."

"No; let us hear him out," said Miss Smith. "Go on, Mrs. Van Dank."

"Next, Mr. Huntingford," Mrs. Van Dank proceeded magisterially, "have you not had a single compassionate thought for all the shattered hearts you left behind you?"

"Daily — hourly — every second!" exclaimed the young man, laying his hand on his heart, and bowing with a tragic air.

There was another chorus of "oh's."

"And with all this longing, gnawing 'like a worm i' the bud,' you couldn't spare us one little visit? Oh, Mr. Huntingford!"

“‘Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.’” quoted one of the girls *sotto voce*. “Don’t spare him, Mrs. Van Dank!”

“‘Therefore ye soft pipes, play on,’” said Huntingford, turning to the last speaker, and continuing the quotation.

“Please attend, Mr. Huntingford; I have not finished,” said Mrs. Van Dank. “Lastly, how is the little boy that was burnt, and were you hurt? We were really alarmed about you, especially when we heard that you had sent for your things.”

“Ah, this is bitter!” exclaimed the young man leaping to his feet. “Last, *lastly*, mark you! was I hurt? I could not have believed it of you.”

“Oh, you’ll get used to that, my boy,” called one of the men who lay stretched on the grass a little distance away, smoking. “After you’ve had my long and bitter experience of the sex, you won’t be surprised to have them taking your head off one minute and going into hysterics of compassion the next; it’s their playful way!”

“Edward Van Dank,” said his wife, who had been quizzing Huntingford, “I am not only surprised, but pained! There, girls, take warning—I need add nothing—the situation speaks for itself.” And she smiled pathetically at her husband.

When the general laugh had subsided, Huntingford said: “Now I have confessed everything; am I absolved?”

“That depends upon Miss Smith,” answered one of the younger girls mischievously. “For

my part I am still skeptical about that 'business.' I have a lingering suspicion that your confession has not been complete, and that we shall yet discover some fair divinity lurking in the background."

The young man had no fear that he should blush; but when one of the men, having risen and thrown away his cigar, joined the group at this moment, saying:

"Mark how he changes color!" and everybody looked at Huntingford and laughed, he did grow very red in the face. However, he answered their laughter lightly: "When you find her, be kind enough to point her out, that I also may worship her."

The sun was near its setting, and Huntingford said he must leave; but at this there was a burst of remonstrance.

"No, no! You must come over to the hotel for supper. We shan't let you off so easily!"

"But, indeed I must hurry back. It is impossible, much as I should like to stay."

"Business, I presume?" quizzed the girl that had spoken last. "Not another word, girls, if Miss Business is expecting him."

The young man laughed good-naturedly as he sprang into his saddle.

"But we shall see you soon?" inquired Mrs. Van Dank, rising to her feet.

"Yes, I promise you that; as soon as ——"

"Business can spare you!" said the irrepressible Miss Fanton, finishing his sentence.

"Well, if you don't," said Miss Smith, coming forward, "we will every one of us cut you in town next winter; won't we, girls?" turning to the group of Gotham beauties.

"Yes, every one of us!" they cried.

"You see what is in store for you, if you prove recreant again," said Mrs. Van Dank; "so you are forewarned."

"By Jove, Huntingford, you're in luck!" laughed Mr. Van Dank. "Here's your chance to break your bonds—I'd give a million to be in your place!"

"Edward," retorted the cynic's wife; "you really need a lecture; your manners are shocking?"

"Oh! oh!" he groaned—"now I'm in for it! I shall suffer on your account, old man; but I don't like to see such a good fellow rushing headlong to destruction. Think of me this evening, and remember Caudle!" and he wrung Huntingford's hand.

"We shall see you at the hop in Adairsville Wednesday evening, at all events," said Miss Smith.

"Yes; and there we shall doubtless learn something of this 'Business,'" added Miss Fanton.

"You will be there of course, won't you, Mr. Huntingford?"

He had already promised May and the ladies at the Adairsville hotel to attend the coming "event" of the summer; therefore he answered readily, "Yes; I've already given my word to be



there;" and gathering up the reins, he raised his hat.

"Hello!" exclaimed one of the men, "here comes Mr. Buchanan. Wait a moment, Huntingford, he's a man you should know, and he rides your way."

Huntingford reined in as Mr. Buchanan rode up to the group. One of the men in the party introduced the two riders, and they sat for a few moments chatting. Then they said good-by, and rode away together.

"You are by no means a stranger to me, Mr. Buchanan," said Huntingford, as they cantered along side-by-side. "I heard you speak at the meeting in Adairsville the other evening; and since then, I have heard Doctor Wayne mention you frequently. He has, indeed, recommended me to apply to you, if legal aid becomes necessary in a case I may have in the neighborhood." And with this introduction, they fell to discussing the affairs of the Wanoto Mines, Huntingford telling only as much as he thought it advisable for the lawyer to know at that time.

Doctor Wayne had spoken enthusiastically of Mr. Buchanan's ability and integrity, and had recommended him as an adviser; and now that the opportunity had come for consulting him, Huntingford did not wish to lose it. Mr. Buchanan, on his part, had no reason for friendly feelings toward Valmont, and it is possible that the instincts of the man as well as the habits of the lawyer prompted the warmth with which he

espoused Huntingford's cause. In fact, he said as much; for, after hearing the young man's story to the end, he prefaced his advice with the remark, "Mr. Valmont and I bear no love for each other. I know him to be openly corrupt in politics, and while I also know him to be a man of unusual ability, I have reason to believe him unscrupulous in his methods. I have long suspected something of what you tell me, and as there is open war between us, I shall not be displeased to enter your cause against him."

By this time they had reached Doctor Wayne's gate.

"Well," said Huntingford, stopping his horse, "I may need your services very soon. I will call upon you when the time for action arrives. Meanwhile, I trust we shall meet soon, irrespective of business."

"I would be happy to have you visit me socially, Mr. Huntingford. Come to dinner any evening, and bring my good old friend Wayne with you. Anyway, we shall meet at the hop Wednesday, shall we not? Everybody is going, and of course you will not miss it."

"Yes, I am down for it," answered Huntingford; "so good-by till Wednesday."

"Till Wednesday," the lawyer returned; and shaking hands cordially, they separated.

"So far, so good," muttered Huntingford, as he rode into the yard. "He is just the man for the business. Here, Wash; Lucifer deserves a good bed to-night."

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE LOGIC OF LOVE.

Love at first sight may be among the possibilities. Two persons of opposite sex, feeling nothing wanting to their daily life, and perfectly contented with their existence and the circumstances of their environment, when they come suddenly face to face with each other, may tumble over head and ears into the tender passion in a manner quite inexplicable; and that would be love at first sight. It is probable that such events are quite rare.

In most cases, a love that is worthy of the name, is the result of mutual respect, or of will power that one of two persons has had an opportunity for exercising over the other. In some few cases, also, it is the price they gladly pay for what may be called mutual sympathy; although this expression does not convey quite the proper idea of that reciprocity of thoughts and longings from which this rarer passion springs.

Although both Huntingford and Miss Larned would have denied an attachment for each other stronger than the bonds of friendship—which, of course, should be accepted as proof that none such existed—still, the impartial observer must look upon them as in the first stages of the dis-

order. In addition to the fact that each found in the other the personification of a preconceived ideal—as far as that is ever possible—which is a favorable if passive agent to such a consummation, there were circumstances in the lives of each that were active in bringing it about.

The state of Huntingford's feelings needs little explanation. He was not so completely absorbed by the claims of a successful business as to be ignorant that there is a higher, a better life than that he was living; a more complete existence, for which financial success, if considered at all, should be regarded as the foundation only. After years of earnest effort, he found himself, at nine and twenty, with that foundation, it is true, but lonely and empty hearted.

More must be said of Miss Larned's side of the case. As the time drew near for her to leave the boarding-school which had been her home since her mother's death, she looked forward to it with increasing enthusiasm. Life in Adairsville would be a more useful existence, she thought. She might then cease to play the schoolgirl, and learn to be an actor on the world's stage. She would help her associates, lighten the loads of the heavy-laden, and live more for others, less for herself.

The time came, and she arrived at the great, grim house.

Heartsick and mind-weary, homesick for the sympathetic companions of her boarding-school days, the end of the first week's sojourn in Adairsville found her. No farther had she come than

to the verge of the field of labor that in her school-girl enthusiasm she had imagined would be hers. She had hoped to make the life of her guardian less silent and gloomy, Miss Waithe less angular and precise, and both more lovable; but she found that, against the armor of coldness and reserve in which they were enveloped, she had no weapon. They and the house remained cold and cheerless.

Courageously attacking the obstinacy of inanimate things, some slight advantages were, however, hers. She contrived to make her home a little more cheerful, with sunlight and flowers in the place of gloom and faded leaves. Beyond this she could not go, and realizing the futility of any attempt bent all her energies to maintain the advantages already won, and to silence the dread voice within, that would not be hushed. "Such your life is now, why should it change? Why should it not be the same for many, many years?"

The struggle goes on—is becoming unendurable. Where shall she turn?

Lo, a man steps suddenly to her side. She looks into his earnest, resolute face, and recognizes a master spirit. She feels the warm clasp of his hand, and listening to his cheerful voice, knows that he, at least, would sympathize with her in her difficulties. She feels that his life is full of purpose, the opposite of her miserable existence, and she admires him for that. So, the seeds of trust are planted in her breast; and the fruit of trust is love.

True, the Doctor was ever ready to lend an attentive ear to anything she had to confide. But he was an old man, and she could not bring herself to tell him all her troubles, fearing that he would regard them as the fancied trials of a school-girl.

Huntingford, she felt, would give a more sympathetic hearing to the story of her misfortunes; although the possibility of confiding them to him was at that time very far from her thoughts.

Mr. Valmont was away from the village most of the time, and when at home was so deeply absorbed in his scheming that the attachment growing up between his ward and the newcomer may have escaped his attention.

In inviting Mr. Grippleigh to Adairsville, he had, among other motives, a strong hope that his ward and the broker would become interested in each other, and a marriage might be arranged between them. He should, therefore, have been more watchful of this new circumstance in her life, which certainly did not tend to make easier the realization of his hope. Whatever he thought, he had nothing to say to the news that his house-keeper brought him now and then about some call of Mr. Huntingford, or some walk or drive that the young man and Miss Larned had taken together. He may not have listened to her gossip; for one could not guess his thoughts from his expression, and often he seemed most attentive when his mind was farthest away—or, realizing the sense of her words, he may have fancied the

affections of a young girl to be as obedient to control as he had found the thoughts and wills of men. But, be that as it may, he said nothing and did nothing to mar the pleasure that the young people found in each other's society. Meanwhile, the seeds of love were planted, and gave indication of a bountiful harvest.

During the afternoon of the day on which Huntingford visited the mine, Kate Alma and Fanny Weatherbee came over, fancy work in hand, to have a quiet afternoon's chat with Miss Larned on the piazza.

The long expected Mr. Gripeigh had arrived, and had been introduced all around; but he had gone into the house to remove the stains of travel and to finish a conversation begun in the drive with Valmont from the station. As soon as the newcomer's back was turned, after the primeval manner of femininity, the girls began to discuss him. The criticism was so effusive, on the part of Miss Weatherbee, in particular, that Miss Alma felt herself called upon, as the oldest of the party, to assert the impossibility of judging people from first impressions. To which Miss Weatherbee retorted:

"Kate, dear, you are exasperatingly chilly at times; and it is not nice, dear." And she smoothed out the dimples in her cheeks, so that her laughing face appeared quite serious for a moment. "Why don't you gush once in awhile, as I do? It is such a relief, after one has been quite sober for a long time."

"And it is the fashion to be enthusiastic," said Kate, with a smile; "but some of us must be serious to make a contrast."

"And we all like serious people," said Miss Larned.

"Serious men—yes," said Miss Weatherbee; "but serious women—never! That's why I am already so much a slave to—let me whisper it—to Mr. Gripeigh. He looks as if he might be tragically serious, on occasion."

It must be confessed that there was something in the man's expression that warranted such criticism.

His face was that of a man young in years, but old in experience; not emaciated, but so thin that the muscles that move the features and produce expression were very distinct. Judging from the brightness of his eyes and the firmness and delicacy of his skin, he might be thirty-five years old—no more; yet lines like those on his face go usually with a larger load of years. Those about his eyes told of a habit he had formed of partly closing them when absorbed in thought; those on his forehead were the shadows of contracted brows; those about his mouth spoke of many sarcastic smiles. A bright, sharp business face it was; a face that might be expected to point like the weather-vane to windward; a face to command respect, even if there was little hope of finding behind it any of the traits of finer feeling that most people look for in a friend.

As to form, Mr. Gripeigh should have been



satisfied with himself. Although no Adonis, Dame Nature had fashioned him much better, according to our ideas of masculine proportions, than she fashions most of her children. He was not as tall, as broad-shouldered, nor as strongly built as Mr. Huntingford; yet nothing was lacking to good proportions, and his quick movements disclosed no small store of energy and nervous force. Add that he was dressed with quiet taste, and you have a man that could not fail to arouse interest, friendly or otherwise, in anyone.

"At least, he is a strong contrast to Mr. Huntingford," said Miss Alma, continuing the conversation; and, as she said it, she threw a searching glance into Miss Larned's face, and added, "in more points than seriousness, I fancy."

But Miss Larned refused to be quizzed, and turning to Miss Weatherbee, asked, "Do you think you shall like him as well as you profess to like Mr. Huntingford?"

"And why not?—better, perhaps. Mr. Huntingford is altogether too much devoted to a certain young lady of my acquaintance to suit my fancy;" then sighing sorrowfully, as if she were not delighted at the warm blush her words had called into Miss Larned's face, she cried: "But such conversation is very idle, and keeps us from more useful employment. What color shall I make these leaves?" holding up the table-cover she was embroidering. "How would a bright blue do? I think the effect would be decidedly unconventional."

"And startling," said May, with a laugh.

"And if you made the color bright enough," Miss Alma added, "it might suggest to your mind, in after years, the spell of miserable weather we have just passed through. Make them a bright blue, by all means; people don't care for nature when an idea is to be conveyed."

So they talked; and Miss Waithe appearing on the piazza, set a chair or two to rights, and with a sniff of contempt at such frivolous conversation, steamed back into the house again.

Comparisons are said to be odious; yet they are the most natural mental exercise possible to us mortals. Whether odious or not, Miss Larned was continually making them at the expense of her fancy work and the conversation with her friends. Before her mind two personalities were standing for judgment—Huntingford and Mr. Gripeigh; and by the comparison, the latter suffered.

It was doubtless unfair to Mr. Gripeigh to call him so soon after his arrival to the bar of judgment; but who shall say that her decision was erroneous? She was much in his society during the rest of the afternoon, after Miss Alma and her friend left, and in the evening Mr. Valmont contrived to keep them always together.

Mr. Huntingford did not appear, and Mr. Gripeigh had a fair opportunity to reverse the unfavorable opinion the young girl had formed of him.

He succeeded only in increasing the severity of

her judgment. His opinions were of the world—worldly-wise, and they jarred very unpleasantly on her sympathetic, romantic nature. He talked as she imagined her stepfather would talk, if the fit took him; and it did not please her to look upon things in the light in which either of these gentlemen seemed to regard them.

And as Mr. Gripleigh retreated into the background, Huntingford came forward into a better light.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### A CHAPTER OF MOTIVES.

Opposition develops energy, but not always of the right sort. To a man who has studied the art of having his own way, of making everything conform to his plans and purposes, anything that dares lift front against him, while it may command his respect, is an adversary that must be overcome at any cost.

When Mr. Gripleigh awoke on the morning following his arrival, two thoughts persistently recurred to his mind—that Miss Larned was very charming, and that she was very rich. Sentiment with him was well-nigh out of question—at least there was little danger that it would carry him in any direction not approved by his reason after he had calculated the chances. In this case, nothing stood in his way. He thought that he had at last

found his ideal of womanhood. On the other hand, he thought that she did not seem as approachable as he could wish. There was a calm politeness in her manner, and a lack of warmth in the words she spoke to him, neither of which was encouraging. He realized that, as far as all outward indications went, her manner was irreproachable, but he felt that, for some reason or other, she failed to estimate him at what he considered his true value.

He was no romantic schoolboy to think that he could charm the feminine mind with a jingle of meaningless phrases; but he felt that his attainments and business ability entitled him to more respect and consideration than she seemed to yield him.

He left the house soon after breakfast, to ride with Valmont to the mine, carrying with him a strong, annoying sense of his utter unimportance in the eyes of the young woman he left behind. She must be taught to give his proffered friendship a more appreciative welcome, he determined; but how to do this was a question that gave an irritating undercurrent to his thoughts throughout the ride.

It is claimed, by admirers of masculine character, that men are not inclined to superfluous conversation. This claim is justified, if Valmont and Gripleigh, on the occasion of this ride, be taken as typical examples. They were both earnest men, and having business in view, were not inclined to waste words. Each knew the

other's purposes; for their plans had been thoroughly canvassed in their many meetings, and in the letters that had passed between them. Each knew what the other had recently done; for this news had been exhausted in conversation since the broker's arrival.

They had already decided that the political contest which Mr. Valmont had just inaugurated would result, early in September, in the election of their favorites. In that direction everything was moving to their liking, and they imagined that greater power and a larger scope for exercising it would soon be theirs.

With regard to those more personal affairs in which lay the cause of Mr. Gripeigh's visit to Adairsville, no explanation was needed between them. The mine property, and the possibility of manipulating it so that it should at last fall into their hands had been fully considered; in fact, plans looking to this result had long ago been put in operation. Mr. Gripeigh was simply paying a visit to a piece of property in which he considered himself as owning, with his partner, a controlling interest. Miss Larned and her wealth were unforeseen complications that he did not care to talk about.

On this subject Valmont, also, had little to say, confining his remarks to commonplaces about the loveliness of his stepdaughter's character and the vastness of her wealth. He fully realized the advantages to be gained should the meeting of Gripeigh and his ward result in marriage. This

ready man of business would then be bound to him by stronger ties, and the embarrassing questions that another might raise concerning the administration of his trust, would not be asked. It would be far better if he had to deal with Grip-leigh as her husband than with anyone else. He quickly divined that his ward had made a strong impression on his companion; but he wisely refrained from attempting to strengthen it by any overt act which might arouse suspicion.

The future looked bright and full of promise to him. The stockholders were already dispirited, owing to the circulation of reports that the vein of ore was failing, and that the cost of smelting exceeded the value of the product.

The value of the stock had shrunk; and the two manipulators were cautiously acquiring a controlling interest.

It remained but to elect a more subservient board of directors, and their success was assured. They could ruin the property, mortgage it, foreclose, and buy it into their own hands.

Applying the test of absolute justice and honesty; their scheme was as heinous a crime as it would have been for them to forge the name or crack the safe of any of the innocent stockholders.

Gripleigh worked on the theory that the world of business is a battle-field, on which any move not forbidden by the written laws is allowable; where the strong and strategic man may, to the extent of his ability, take advantage of the weak-

ness and simplicity of his adversary; where the conqueror has a right to be a law unto himself, provided he can make good his claim to conquest.

He was not to blame for overreaching others, if through carelessness or stupidity they allowed themselves to be overreached.

The world of business was no place for a stupid man, and the sooner he was driven out of it the better for him and all concerned. In fact, it would not have been a difficult task for Mr. Grip-leigh, if he had cared for reasoning of that kind, to have brought himself to believe that by overreaching simplicity so lamblike, he was not only benefiting mankind in general, but actually doing a service to the deluded one in particular, for which some moderate return of thanks was due.

Valmont, on the other hand, regarded the world—the whole arena of life, not that of trade alone—as the field of a struggle between the Jew and the Gentile; a second desert, through which his God-chosen people were wandering to a Promised Land. Impatient by nature and unsubmissive to constraint, the theory that vengeance is the province of Jehovah, who will in His own good time repay, found little support from Jacob Valmont. The Jews, through long years of self-education; through the power born of wide experience; through the very scourgings of evil report and contempt that the Gentiles were laying upon them everywhere—might arise, at last, a race of

kings, who by their inherent strength of character, should govern the earth, as God intended and promised from the beginning. But such results must come slowly—not in his lifetime—and he craved to see some of the approaching glory before his eyes closed. Even if he might not enter into the Promised Land with his rejoicing people, it was but the due of one that had labored so long and so earnestly in the cause, to be permitted at least to gaze upon it, as Moses did, from a mountain side afar off. To sit passively waiting for some divine summons to take a throne already established was not his idea; but to seize upon the affairs of life with a master hand; to use his enemies and their resources as best he might; and so to establish, at last, a throne that should be everlasting and unshakable, because founded in long deserving, and won by strength.

This was his purpose in life; not to gain wealth for itself. Therefore the swindling of his enemies out of their property was not, to his mind, a crime, but a wise use of advantages ready to his hand.

Once possessed of the mine—for he had no doubt of his ability to overreach Gripeigh when the proper time should come, as they together were overreaching others—and having the political influence that would belong to him as the power behind the throne, if he succeeded in seating his candidate, his means for doing good and thereby making himself a great leader among his people would be more than adequate. The same im-



patience that ruled his ambition for the elevation of his race swayed also his more personal motives. It forbade his being a servant in Israel, and urged him—forced him forward to assume leadership.

A man with such ambitions and purposes, driving everything before him with the lash of an irresistible will, while he himself walks within the shadow of discovery and destruction, can never be happy; but a stern satisfaction takes the place of that more human feeling when he sees, as Valmont saw, what he has accomplished—that he has gone thus far along his dangerous path without mishap.

Mile after mile of the road between Adairsville and the mine was quickly traversed by the mettlesome horses; and it was not long before they crossed the ridge that runs parallel with the Wanoto, and Grippleigh saw the river, winding through the valley beneath, and the mine buildings along its banks.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

“AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY.”

“Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work.” Thus commands the time-honored law of Sinai; and if there be any corner of the earth where this law is still respected in letter and in spirit it is

in the country villages of New England. Our painfully good and crabbedly godly Puritan forefathers settled this matter for us, by laying the foundations of law and prejudice so deep and broad that it will take hard and persistent battering for nineteenth century liberalism to start so much as the dust on their hoary bulwarks. Here, even the children—true embodiments of the spirit of unrest during six days of the week—settle down on Sunday into prim little old men and women; for above their devoted heads hangs the incubus of solemn precedent, suppressing all spontaneity. The contrast is all the more striking because of the exaggerated activity of the week; nowhere is the housewife's broom busier, the mill-wheel more persistent, or the farmer more jealous of the sun-lighted hours. But when Sunday returns, it is as if some magical hand had reached down from a cloud and blotted out all record and memory of the past week. The cat sleeps unmolested in the sun on the back doorstep; the spider spins unhindered his geometrical snare in shady corners of the ceiling; and the horses stretch their necks in idle tranquility across the bars of the pasture, forgetful of the plow rusting in the half-completed furrow. On this day, also, the best room, too dark and sombre for any but sacred uses, is opened for the ceremonious reception of subdued visitors. The single task allotted to the day is attendance upon "Divine service," but this is so rigidly exacted by an uncompromising public opinion that he must be a

brave man that would dare to absent himself from church two Sundays in succession. To many of the "professors of religion" themselves, this weekly spasm of good clothes, good behavior, and godliness is virtually a day in purgatory; for, beyond the unnatural solemnity of look, tone, and bearing demanded by universal custom, the mere wearing of "Sunday clothes" is, to the free-born, loose-jointed, and easy-going Yankee, a very lion in the way to the Celestial City.

But there is to the institution another side that makes it almost as pleasant as it is awful; here are twenty-four hours of uneventful calm, taken forcibly out of the one hundred and sixty-eight of the hurrying week. Hitherto the busy sea of life and passion surges and roars; within this little land-locked bay there is peace, and heaven lies reflected in the haven in which the weary voyagers anchor for a space their battered fleet. The preacher may drone venerable platitudes through a sonorous nose; but the quite of the church is grateful, and in the summer when windows are opened heaven and earth smile in from broad miles of sunny space.

The most pretentious of the three churches in Adairsville boasted, during nine months of the year, the services of a minister far above the average in talents and earnestness; but during the summer season it paid the usual penalty for such superiority, when the Rev. Dr. Brillings, exhausted by his labors of the year, usually took a vacation. That he earned this repose no one could dispute, for he was a constant and conscientious worker;

a man of week-day as well as Sunday piety, and one who did not hesitate (metaphorically speaking) to throw off his coat and pitch in against the demons of immorality, ignorance, and misery wherever he found them. Nor did he await the call of duty; but with the ardor of a detective, ferreted out opportunities for exercising practical Christianity. For the rest, he was not a violent dogmatist, and did not scruple to aid, in an unobtrusive way, the charitable work of the Catholic priest at the other end of the village; who in turn respected, and did not hesitate to consult with him, as a man, without bringing up any doctrinal question as to his "invincible ignorance" or other points of theological difference. During the Rev. Doctor's vacation, his place was filled with such material as could be found among the summer boarders in the vicinity, or with students from the theological college at Paley, about twenty miles down the river.

The youth that occupied the pulpit on the Sunday following Grippleigh's arrival was a downy-chinned student of theology from New Haven. He had come to Adairsville for a week's fishing, and had been promptly impressed into service.

The church was full. Among the congregation sat Mr. Valmont, Miss Larned, and Mr. Grippleigh; for Valmont, consistent throughout in the character he had assumed, had a conspicuous pew, and was one of the most constant attendants at the church, to the support of which he contributed, if not liberally, at least regularly. He

never went so far as to identify himself, by membership, with Christians; but even this fact reflected to his credit; for many members of the church were less careful than he of the observances that to them were duties, while to him they were mere privileges.

At another place, nearly opposite, Doctor Wayne sat with Mr. Huntingford; while somewhat farther back, Miss Waithe, in all the frigid glory of her customary Sabbath suit of solemn black, sat beside her enamored Hezekiah, who looked uncomfortably rigid and constrained in a new worsted suit made by the village tailor.

What unkind fate is it that imposes upon so many country church organs the affliction of chronic bronchitis? And why is it that village choirs, almost without exception, sing through their noses? These are questions that, so far as we know, casuists have not answered. The music in Dr. Brilling's church was no exception to the general rule; the organ, manipulated by a young woman, coughed, wheezed, and lamented dolefully in the cadences; the bass singer gurgled and groaned; the tenor shrieked painfully from a constricted throat; the soprano squealed as if the organ loft were full of mice, and the contralto strove vainly, through her pretty nose, to maintain the undulating line between the groaning bass and the squealing soprano.

The unfledged parson read a schoolboy composition anent an awful text; but so mild and soothing were the platitudes he delivered that he

failed wholly either to frighten or to interest his audience. Excepting Miss Waithe, there was among the entire congregation, probably, not a person whose attention did not frequently wander from the speaker. That lady, however, whose rule of conduct admitted no relaxation of the stern discipline of duty, took her religion, as she took everything else in life, down to ironing and chamomile tea, as part of a solemn dispensation.

She never for an instant allowed an alien murmur to distract her ear, nor an alien sight to allure her eye from the preacher. Had the organ loft crashed down upon the pews behind her she would hardly have turned her head. Had a man fallen dead in front of her she would probably have felt scandalized by his irreverence in choosing such a place for his demise. Had she, by any chance, caught herself in a momentary lapse of attention she would have looked upon it as the result of a personal assault of the fiend, and would have suffered greater remorse therefor than if she had overlooked a fly speck upon the mirror, or set a chair awry.

Hezekiah, on the other hand, finding the minister less interesting than his fair companion, passed the time with side glances, half bashful and half proprietary, at that lady, suppressed yawns, and momentary shiftings of his position.

Huntingford made no pretense of interest, but after listening to the opening sentences of the sermon and finding them unpromising, turned his gaze in the direction of Mr. Valmont's pew;

and there it rested contentfully during the greater part of the half-hour, which did not seem long to him. But Miss Larned, all unconscious of the pleasant thoughts she was inspiring in her fellow-worshipper, tried hard to feel interested in the discourse, and only at long intervals allowed her attention to stray toward the open windows and the green churchyard beyond, where in ash and willow the birds also were worshipping in their gladder, freer way.

The sermon was ended at last—though the weary, restless children scattered through the congregation had long since concluded, in their agony, that it was to be eternal—and after a closing prayer, a hymn, and the benediction, the released congregation filed out into the open air, and breathed freely, glad, now that it was over, that they had been found among the faithful. They gathered in little groups on the greensward and about the door, discussing the sermon, and drifting from that subject into politics, agriculture, and social gossip.

Dr. Wayne stood for a few minutes to exchange friendly words with his neighbors and acquaintances; for he was a popular man throughout all this countryside, and country custom demands that one who is popular shall repay the admiration of his constituency—as politicians call it—by holding himself accessible when occasion permits. Besides, he was a doctor, and country tradition imposes upon the disciples of Esculapius the duty of knowing everything, and holding

such knowledge "on tap," subject to the call of any customer. Moreover, Dr. Wayne's nature was of the sympathetic sort that delights in pleasing others; and it was to him a source of quiet gratification when he found himself able, by kindly word or judicious advice, to comfort or help a fellow being. There were valetudinarians that stopped to rehearse to him for the thousandth time, their various ailments; and such was their faith in him, that his advice, heard in the same words for the thousandth time, was regarded as a new revelation of science. Farmers also consulted him regarding sick cows and weevil-blighted crops, with like confidence in his wisdom; and one old lady, not dreaming of disrespect to the profession, sought his advice upon the treatment of a molting canary.

Presently Mr. Valmont came out with Miss Larned and Mr. Gripeigh, and the latter was then introduced to Huntingford and the Doctor. The broker glanced keenly at Huntingford from half-closed eyelids during the moment of introduction, and then turned to speak with Dr. Wayne and Mr. Valmont. Huntingford, thus left to Miss Larned, forgot in a moment his heroic resolution, and eagerly seized the opportunity for a chat. He felt as if he had been exiled during the last few days, and now suddenly found himself at home and among friends. The mere presence of the young girl cast a spell upon his mind, and for the moment he forgot everything but the beauty of her face and the sweetness



of her voice. His thoughts were tumultuous and ecstatic; and yet his words were matter of fact enough, as he spoke of the beauty and quiet of the day, which he said he found very grateful.

"The day is certainly perfect," said Miss Larned, in answer; "but I fear you must have found the sermon wearisome."

"On the contrary," he returned, "I never enjoyed a service more thoroughly. I must confess that I was not a very attentive listener; but the quiet of the church was pleasant, and I did not find the time long."

"Oh!" exclaimed the young girl, with a bright smile of gratification, "I am so glad you do not criticise! We country people are a little sensitive, and summer visitors are apt to be very severe upon our sermons. Somehow, I can not help taking their remarks as almost personal criticism. I wish you could hear our own Doctor Brillings preach. He is so wise and kind and manly in his sermons that one can't hear him without loving him and feeling benefited by his advice. Besides, he is, personally, so good that one feels that he is sincere."

At this point Gripeigh's voice broke in upon the talk—

"Miss Larned, I am sure will agree with me; will you not?"

He returned as he mentioned her name, to include her in the conversation.

"What is the subject?" she asked, smiling at this direct appeal; "I will not commit myself."

"I was just saying," he explained, "that it would be far more profitable to remain at home and read a good chapter on political economy or finance—or, shall we say, a poem or two of Tennyson—than to sit for a good part of the forenoon pretending interest in such a sermon as we heard this morning. For my part, I never could understand why callow youths like that one should be allowed to stand in our pulpits, pretending to teach us conduct, morality, and religion, when, were they to attempt any other subject, such as literature, science, or art, no one would pay them a moment's attention. It is all the more senseless, because with the latter subjects they could do no harm, while with the former they can at least bore people into irreverence, if nothing worse. Now, Miss Larned, I have ventured the assertion that you will agree with me." He spoke calmly, as if he liked to hear himself talk, and appealed to May with the easy superiority of one who is sure of his audience.

"Do you wish my candid opinion?" asked the young girl.

"Certainly," Mr. Gripleigh answered.

"Well, then," she returned, with animation and rising color, "I think one ought, in such cases, as in all others, to consider the intention, and find in that some measure of excuse for any faults of method. Religion is not like science, art, or anything else; but is personal, and, as we believe, does not depend on the human instrument through which it is taught; and for this

reason, it seems to me that it depends more upon one's self than upon the preacher, what one gains from a sermon."

"But," objected the broker, "if the instrument is faulty the music will be spoiled."

"Certainly," she retorted quickly; "for one that can not read the music. But Beethoven, after he became deaf, was moved to tears at the rendering of a symphony of which he could not hear a note. To me, there is so much more in the place and in the meaning of the service than in the mere words of the sermon, that I can not imagine myself coming from church unbenefited."

"May is a stanch church woman," said the Doctor, smiling with affectionate pride on his young friend, "and it is perilous to cross theological weapons with her."

"And besides, my dear Frederick," remarked Valmont, drily, "I fancy that you look upon a church service, primarily, more as an unavoidable interruption to your calculations on the Monday's market than as a service of devotion, attractive *per se*. You are a good broker, but a poor Christian, I fear, my dear friend!"

At that moment there came an addition to the group. Miss Waithe and Hezekiah, who had been exchanging compliments with acquaintances, joined them. Hezekiah never lost an opportunity for meeting the Doctor, whom he regarded as a walking epitome of human goodness and erudition. But on this occasion he had hardly time to



"Well, we all got to go sometime." Page 179.



utter his customary greeting, ere, to the astonishment of everyone, Miss Waithe—figuratively speaking—put on the gloves with Mr. Gripeigh.

That gentleman had just responded to Mr. Valmont's remark, by saying that, admitting himself to be a poor Christian, he knew, at the least, a poor sermon when he heard one. This observation, Miss Waithe, who had caught a part also of his previous remarks, considered as a direct challenge of her personal opinions; so she said:

"I ain't much used to speakin' 'thout bein' first asked; but I jest can't listen, cold-blooded like, to sech words as them, 'thout hevin' my say, if I was to die for it next minnit!"

Valmont scowled slightly; but the Doctor, with a humorous glance at May, said: "Speak on, Miss Waithe. You don't often talk except when you have something to say; and the opinion of so regular a churchgoer as you should be worth hearing on the subject."

"Well, my say is this," she continued, emphasizing with her green sunshade, "there's a sight too much finnickin' about the cut an' fixin's o' the sermons as is preached, an' a heap too little rememberin' how it's the Lord's word as is bein' preached from. I guess if every which an' tother of us was to try considerin' his own sins in meetin', we wouldn't none of us find half as much time to pick faults in the preacher or the preachin'." And directing a withering glance at Gripeigh, she turned away without waiting for an answer.

"Miss Waithe is no respecter of persons!" exclaimed Huntingford, laughing heartily, as soon as she was out of ear-shot.

"No!" added Miss Larned, echoing the laugh; she is as uncompromising in religion as in house-keeping."

"In which art," said Valmont, "she is perfection embodied."

May laughed again. "Painful perfection, I should say."

Her stepfather did not smile in approval of this remark.

"Exactly what I should imagine," Gripleigh returned; "and her opinion admirably points the moral of what I was saying. I take her to be a severely proper woman; but one who would not enjoy a pleasant task, and who would look on it as sinful rather than otherwise to find herself too greatly pleased with even a religious exercise. She is a poor critic, but what an ideal mourner she would make!"

Everybody appreciated this keen analysis of Miss Waithe's character.

"Yes," May assented; "she is as intolerant of the 'appearance of evil' as of the ghost of untidiness."

By this time the church was nearly empty, and most of the congregation were on their way home. The party shook hands and separated; but May, as she took the Doctor's hand, said softly, "You have not been to see me for an age; won't you come over this evening—and bring Mr. Hunting-

ford with you?" And the old gentleman, seeing assent in Huntingford's eyes, accepted the invitation for both.

Valmont, mindful of his interests in the coming election, lingered to talk politics with those of the farmers that still stood about the carriages, while Miss Larned walked home with Gripeigh. The Doctor and his friend followed them.

Meanwhile, Hezekiah and Miss Waithe had wandered off to the churchyard, where they presently found themselves alone among the monuments and tombstones. It was an opportunity for personal conversation not to be neglected.

They stopped to read the name on a slab that had been recently set up.

"Sar' Ann Fletcher," read Hezekiah, slowly; and then he said with a sigh:

"She was alive an' peart enough this time last year. Well, we all got to go some time, J'rushy!"

"Yes," assented Miss Waithe; "an' lookin' at them tombstones allus makes me think as how we'd oughter make the best of our time whilst here; to keep our house swep' an' garnished, as you might say; an' pertickler to be keerful not to leave none 'ceptin' kind feelin's behind us."

"How beautiful you do talk, J'rush!" exclaimed the enamored swain; "it makes me creep all over, jest like one o' Doctor Brillin's's sermons."

"It's all very well fer you to be talkin' about Doctor Brillin's's sermons! I lay you don't so much as remember the tex' as was preached from to-day. Oh, I never looked; but I c'u'd hear ye



a squirmin' about like a pollywog. It give me the fidgets. How could ye, Hez?"

"Now, look-a-here, Rushy!" This was Hezekiah's pet name for his Phyllis, and his tone was especially propitiatory whenever he used it. "How d' ye calk'late a feller's goin' to set all his idees on the preachin', with sich a gal as you settin' aside of him—say?"

"Then I guess we better not go to meetin' in comp'ny ag'in, if I spile the proper respeck due to the Lord's house," retorted the lady crisply, though she could not altogether hide the gratification she found in this rude attempt at compliment. "Furthermore, an' besides," she continued with impressive severity, "you needn't tell me! Folks as is so easy upsot by other folks settin' aside of 'em, don't keep theirselves away from 'em, for dear knows how long at a time."

"No; it ain't jest that," Hezekiah hastened to respond. "Somehow I feel religiouser settin' alongside o' you, than ary other times. But I can't help sort o' mixin' 'em, ye know; they do seem nat'rally to belong t'gether, you an' religion, I mean; an' as for stayin' away last Sunday, ye know we had a spell o' weather, so's I couldn't take out the gray; an' before that—wall, I sort o' gethered from some things ye said, ye'd jest as lief."

The maiden looked him unflinchingly in the eye.

"Now, look-a-here, Hezekiah Hopkins; will you jest tell me what I ever said or done to give you that notion?"

Hezekiah turned several colors, and cast around anxiously for an avenue of escape; but seeing none, finally stammered:

“Wall, ye see, Rushy—don’t git mad now.”

“Who’s a gettin’ mad?” demanded Jerusha, with sternness.

“Wall,” in desperation, “don’t ye recollect how ye said ye didn’t want me a playin’ th’ ole fool around you, an’ as how I’d oughter have some sense?”

Jerusha, indignant for good cause, answered impressively:

“Wall, Hezekiah Hopkins, do tell! Ef any one ’ad up ’an told me you didn’t have more gumption about wimin’ folks than to mind a leetle o’ their foolin’, I wouldn’t ’a’ believed it—I vow I wouldn’t! But seein’s you’ve allowed it your own self, I reckon it must be so. Laws ’a’ mercy! for the land’s sake!”—and the maiden laughed grimly.

Somewhat heartened and encouraged by the tone of this reply, Hezekiah answered meekly, that next time he should know better; and in order to make an opportunity for putting to the test his newly-gained wisdom, proposed a ride to camp-meeting that very afternoon; to which proposal Jerusha demurely and unsuspectingly assented. It is believed, on the evidence of later developments, that the occasion proved propitious to the timid gallant’s aspirations.

Meanwhile, they left the place of tombs, and strolled amicably toward Mr. Valmont’s house,

whither the owner had preceded them some time before.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### DIPLOMACY.

"If in the illimitable but coherent mystery, which men call the universe, there bendeth a listening ear to creatures who presume to speak"—runs a memorable prayer. "If" is the first word.

Has it not occurred at some time to everyone; that all present good and future bliss are based on the unstable "if." "It is," is the daylight; "if," the black night that follows.

Something of the gloom and mystery of this "if" hung over Miss Larned that Sunday evening, while the twilight was fading into night.

The clamor of church bells calling worshippers to evening service had ceased. The noise of passing footsteps was hushed. Now and then the music of some church organ or of congregational singing fell indistinctly on her ears. But when those sounds died away she was left alone with her thoughts; and they resembled in no slight measure the thoughts that must have prompted such a prayer.

Not that she questioned the existence of a God, who might listen if He would—the prayer itself does not suggest such a query. She did not

doubt that He is ever ready to listen to the prayers and sorrows of His children.

But, deny it who will—after Him, our ideals are our divinities; or if not that, they are at least the paths by which we strive to lift ourselves, if but a hair's breadth nearer Him. Our reverence for Him, our worship of Him, our worthiness to be numbered among His children, are measured by the strength and the purity of our ideals.

And Miss Larned's ideals had received so many serious shocks that day from Mr. Gripleigh's sarcastic tongue that they seemed tottering and knocking against one another.

Mr. Gripleigh had studiously sought opportunities for conversation with her; and in the long hours they spent together in the afternoon, he had made himself more than usually entertaining. He put forth his greatest efforts; for, to conquer the girl's indifference toward him had now grown from a passing fancy to the dignity of an absorbing purpose. He flattered himself with the thought that she was interested in his talk.

She was interested. Yet, as the conversation wandered from topic to topic, she noticed that he dismissed at once every subject that had no reference to the immediate present, as if he would have her understand that he considered only the present moment worthy of attention. In this connection, the follies and errors of men were themes to which he often recurred, and he treated them as facts of which the wise man takes advantage; not as failings which the philanthropist is

ever trying to correct. It was plainly to be seen that he had studied the world and men seriously and earnestly. It was plainer still, that he had no respect and little love for either, regarding them as mere factors in life's equation that must be known, to make possible a correct solution. Such motives stamp a man as thoroughly selfish, if not unscrupulous.

Yet the logic of one that talks in such a vein is well-nigh irresistible; as he can base his theories on what must be acknowledged as painfully near the truth.

And so it was that when Valmont took his guest for a drive in the late afternoon, Miss Larned was left at home, alone with the black "if."

If Gripeigh's logic were true, then hers was false. If her ideals were false then what was the object of life—the use of living?

But the echo of the church bells had hardly died away when the Doctor and Huntingford came to her aid with the other side of the question. The follies and frailties of humanity were not touched upon by them. If their conversation was unstudied, unheroic, it was full of loving kindness, peace, and good-will.

One by one the stars came out in heaven, shining brighter as the night deepened. The day builds above our heads a dome of light that our eyes can not penetrate; but in the kindly night it melts away, so that we may see something of the measureless mystery that lies beyond. Then our

thoughts are not for ourselves; for selfishness has no place under those steady, eternal lights—but rather we pray for others the Persian's prayer—"Oh, God! have mercy upon the wicked; for Thou hast done everything for the good in making them good."

Such was the spirit of good-will that animated the conversation after the Doctor and Huntingford had settled into their places at either side of the young lady; although they did not attempt, in words, so high a plane. That it was a relief to Miss Larned, after Gripeigh's egotistic conversation, may be imagined. And this relief found unconscious expression in many ways; so that both Huntingford and the older man, without guessing the reason, found their companion more lovely and lovable than usual.

It was a happy trio that Valmont found when he returned with Gripeigh a half-hour later. Valmont having fetched chairs for his guest and himself, they sat down with the others. Cigars were lighted, and the conversation became general. But the arrival of the newcomers was not an unalloyed pleasure to the others; in fact, it was at once apparent that the flow of pleasant thoughts had received a decided check, the conversational efforts of Mr. Valmont to the contrary notwithstanding. The latter, for some reason, seemed determined to make himself agreeable, especially to the Doctor; and the pleasant things he said to that gentleman were many.

Meanwhile Miss Larned, sitting between the

two younger men, was endeavoring to find some topic that should be congenial to both, but with little success. Meeting under the most favorable circumstances, there were few subjects that could arouse their mutual interest; but now, with a coveted, half-acknowledged prize to contend for, there was little chance that they could be brought into harmony. The young lady soon admitted to herself, not without secret pleasure, the impossibility of success in that direction; and giving up the attempt to lead the conversation, allowed it to wander whither it pleased.

Mr. Gripeigh thereupon discovered that he was decidedly "out of it," as our British cousins say. The consequent secret annoyance of that gentleman may be imagined. As he grew silent, Huntingford seemed to find more and pleasanter things to say. More and more rarely did Miss Larned turn to Gripeigh with questions intended to draw him into the conversation.

His annoyance was not to be endured; something must be found on which his vexation might be vented. The occasion soon offered.

The conversation between the Doctor and Valmont, having begun with local politics and the probable result of the election now drawing near, had turned, when those topics were exhausted, to larger subjects—to international affairs and the parts that races have played in history.

The Doctor spoke: "But the strangest of all nations, or rather races—for I do not suppose that we can call them a nation, since they have no

land—is the Jews;” then he waited for Valmont’s answer, little knowing what thoughts his words had awakened in the other’s mind.

But none of those thoughts were uttered; as Gripeigh, having found his opportunity, said in a harsh, combative voice—“They are indeed a peculiar people. If there is one name that fits them more than another, it is ‘money getter,’ and they are not at all careful as to the means they employ to get it.”

“Yet our criminal courts are surprisingly free from Jewish defendants,” said the Doctor.

Meanwhile Valmont, feeling that an attack was being made upon his people that he dared not openly oppose, held his peace with an effort. Yet his mental excitement could have been read in the flashing of his eye.

“That may be,” continued Gripeigh, anxious to oppose someone, yet not imagining that he was attacking anyone directly; for he knew as little as the Doctor of Valmont’s personal secret—“that may be; but you will acknowledge that the first part of what I said is true. We call the Yankee a natural financier. We say that two Yankees shipwrecked on a desert island will have made fortunes out of each other in a very short while. Put a Jew alone on that same island, visit him again after a time, and you will find him a millionaire. As regards honesty, the world calls the Jew a cheat—but by the laws!—always by the laws! Surely I may repeat what the world says.”



The holy nation was attacked, and Valmont opened not his lips.

"But is it fair to arraign them, when we know they can not answer?" asked Miss Larned, thinking to place herself on the Doctor's side.

"And we should accuse the individual Jew fraud, if we accuse anyone—not the race," added Huntingford.

These three were evidently against Grippe and Valmont refused to aid him. He became more vexed and reckless, though still outwardly calm.

"It is perfectly fair to accuse a race of faults of its individuals, when we know that the character of the race is in harmony with the faults. From the beginning, the Jew has been on the 'off side' of creation—a race apart. What is he to-day? A parasite on the body politic of the world. The nation that protects him flourishes for a time, then fades away, and another comes into its place; but the Jew is always there. He is as obsequious a servant of the last as of the first. His new home is as good as his old one—he has no home. Political parties rise and prey upon one another; the Jew, standing at the edge of the arena, watches and preys upon both. Anybody's loss is his gain. Without ambition, except to provide for his temporal wants, no ties of place affect him—only the tie of race. Is he of any use to the world? What has he ever done?"

Valmont was no longer able to keep silent.

"What has the Jew done?" he asked; and

calm voice gave no signs of the tumult in his mind. Then, turning to Gripeigh,—“Let us be just before all things. Let us see, Frederick, whether the Jew has left a mark on history. The sun of Christian civilization had its dawn in Chaldea, where a shepherd chief, watching the starry heavens through the calm Syrian nights, read in them the secret of the one God; and that shepherd, centuries before Abraham was born, was the father of the Jews, as we call them.” Even though he spoke as a Christian, the word “Jew” is so constantly made a term of reproach, that he shrank from using it without a qualifying clause. “Is not this much true?” he asked, and paused to hear what his listeners might say; but no answer came. The Doctor had no objections to raise, for Valmont’s words followed his own line of thought. Miss Larned and Huntingford were both too much surprised that Mr. Valmont should care to open his lips at all upon a topic of conversation so unusual with him, to wish to interrupt him. As for Mr. Gripeigh, the shepherd chief and the dawn of civilization lay too far back in the past for him to have any intelligent opinion to offer in support or in denial of Valmont’s declaration.

He continued: “There is an English measure of quantity that is familiar wherever grain is bought and sold; it is called the ‘quartern.’ Do you know of what it is a quarter? Go to the great pyramid of Gizeh, and there, in what is erroneously called the ‘King’s Chamber,’ you will find a porphyry

coffer. If books tell the truth, the English quarter is exactly one-fourth of the capacity of that coffer.\* Examine the pyramid itself; it is mysterious, sublime, and suggestive of hidden meanings. To him who has the key to its structure, it reveals wonderful things. If we may believe the scientists that have studied it, there is no mathematical fact in our possession that was not known to them that built it. Its unit of measurement is the true unit of measure. Divide the length of its base by this unit, and the result will be the number of days, and the exact fraction of a day in the cyclical year. In the silence and darkness of the King's Chamber lives eternal equilibrium and calm immutability, without variations of temperature, and unchanged through all the changes of times and peoples. It is a marvelous edifice, hiding for the deeper wisdom of races yet unborn, fundamental, and perhaps, to us, even undiscernible truths. And you ask me who wrought this marvelous work? Who, but the Jew?

“Ages before the first glimmer of civilization in the rest of the world, centuries before Egyptian history begins, this God-instructed race of shepherds, descending from the Syrian plains, under the guidance of their nameless God, built this portentous monument, to give the unborn world the everlasting archetype of a just measure, and

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\* “One Coffer equals 1.007 of four quarters imperial.” Prof. C. Piazza Smyth; *Life and Work at the Great Pyramid*.

a just weight, and a knowledge of the unfailing laws by which the universe is governed. It has fulfilled its mission; for every measure that has survived the buffets of time is based upon that standard."

The spirit of his great, but down-trodden race was burning in his blood, and bade him assert its glory at whatever cost. -

"Yet, all this is but little," he continued: "While Greece set herself, heart and soul and mind, to the expression of mere material beauty; while Rome wasted the earth to solve the problem of empire, the conditions of which change as the sands of the shore; while the rest of the world ravened and reveled in the wildest and fiercest barbarism—one little handful of earnest people, dwelling in the narrow valley of the Jordan, studied and wrought out of their very hearts the principles of morality—a work that shall not fail from earth while truth is truth and God is God.

"What has the Jew done? Is not that a strange—a stultifying question, for Christians to ask?" and Valmont smiled the serious smile of a man who knows that his humor has reached sublimity.

The Doctor, trying to make these lofty expressions harmonize with his conception of Valmont's character, was mentally too busy to carry on the discussion; and the others had little to say.

The conversation dropped gradually away to lighter themes; yet a perceptible seriousness had

fallen upon the party, which endured until, the evening being spent, Huntingford and the Doctor departed.

"This Huntingford is quite attentive to your ward," Gripeigh whispered in Valmont's ear, as the Doctor and Huntingford were bidding May good-night at the steps.

Valmont started from his abstraction and turned to look at the two young people, who were lingering over their farewells. "Yes," he said in a tone of displeasure; "it seems so!" The truth dawned upon him so suddenly that it staggered him, and he was chagrined to realize that he had waited for another to suggest what had been lying open before him and inviting discovery for weeks past.

His voice was peculiarly soft and persuasive, when, after Gripeigh left them, he asked May for a few moments' conversation before they separated for the night.

Certainly, if he wished it, she answered, hiding her uneasiness as best she could; for in the strangeness of her guardian's request, and in the peculiar tone of his voice, there was a warning that the subject of this conversation would be unusual, if not unpleasant.

Without another word, Valmont led the way to the library, and motioning his ward to a chair by the desk, fell to pacing the room.

"I hardly know how to introduce what I would say," said he at last, stopping suddenly beside May's chair; and trouble and hesitation were so

well simulated in his voice, that it touched the girl's heart, brought him nearer to her, and endowed him in her mind with more of the attributes of a father and protector than he had ever before revealed. Watching her expressive face, he saw that he had made a good beginning. Then, after a pause, he asked, "Have you known this Mr. Huntingford long?" and redoubled the sharpness of his scrutiny.

"I met him at Doctor Wayne's the evening of the debate in the park. I never saw him before. Why do you ask?" and she looked up, with the idle hope of getting an answer from the expression of his face.

But his visage was inscrutable; and after he had given her an opportunity to realize this, he turned away, and resumed his pacing back and forth. Yet the girl was seldom out of the circle of his vision, for all his seeming thoughtfulness and the fact that he kept his eyes apparently fixed upon the floor. The intervals when her slightest motion could escape his notice were very brief and his ears were doubly watchful for the slightest exclamation—even her rapid breathing he seemed to hear, for he knew that if he would learn her heart he must pay the strictest attention to the variations of tones in her voice, the changes in her manner, the motions of her hands, and the expressions of her face—rather than to the words she spoke.

"I hardly know why," he answered slowly; "and, now that I have broached the subject, it

seems as if it would have been better to have let it alone." Then, as if he did not see her puzzled embarrassment, he continued in an easier, more straightforward tone: "However, as I have begun, perhaps I ought to tell you what was in my mind"—and he stopped again beside her chair. "It seems to me that this gentleman shows great interest in you—oh, he certainly does that!" he cried convincingly, in answer to her ejaculation of surprised denial—"and at one time I had an idea that you were inclined to encourage——"

"You astonish me!" she interrupted, flushing hotly and angrily; for, leaving her liking for Mr. Huntingford out of the question, it was anything but pleasant to discover that her actions had been so closely watched. The knowledge also that her face was betraying her, added to her embarrassment.

"I see now, that I have surprised you," he continued; but his tone was so calm and business-like, that she did not know in what sense to take his words. "Yet I feel that I ought to say something that may be of assistance to you at some future time, though it does not now apply." This last concession was a relief, even if she did not give him full credit for candor in making it. "I dislike very much to touch upon such subjects; because it must seem to you like an assumption of knowledge of matters that you yourself should know best."

"Yes; but what is it you wish to say?" she asked impatiently, anxious to know the worst as

soon as possible, and unconsciously trying to force him out of that serenity of face and calmness of tone that surrounded his latent purposes as with a wall, defying her penetration.

Undisturbed by her impatience, he continued : “You are aware that you will soon be of age, and possessed of wealth such as seldom falls into the hands of a young woman; and you have, unfortunately, no natural protector or adviser to help you to invest it safely and judiciously. My long experience of the world teaches me that such a property will prove a tempting bait to lure around you many people—do not interrupt me please—many people who will ask your pecuniary assistance in furthering their schemes. Very many of them will be honest in their intentions, and their schemes, if well managed, would result to your advantage; but too often—in fact, nine times out of ten—such plans fail for lack of proper skill in executing them; and you, or, whoever else invests money in them, will be almost sure to lose it.” He had taken a seat at the other side of the library desk, and keeping her in view without appearing to watch her, was punctuating his sentences with dents which he made in the desk-blotter with the end of a pen-holder. He paused for a moment, that his next words might strike more squarely; for he saw that the girl was no longer embarrassed, but was paying close attention to his words, as if she was beginning to think that he had in speaking no other motive than the one he professed—to advise and caution.



"There are others," he continued; "young men, who will try to win your affection."

He saw her start and turn away, bringing her face more into the shadow cast by the shade of the lamp that stood between them on the desk.

"If you could not lay claim to any part of that beauty you certainly possess," he continued; but his flattery failed of its mark—"if such were the case, you would find many suitors at your feet; how much more so, being both attractive and rich. To return to this Mr. Huntingford——"

"I know what you would say," she interrupted hastily; "but you wrong him, I am sure! Never has he let fall a syllable that could suggest such an idea as you seem to have formed. Do you think that Doctor Wayne would introduce to me a man that he did not know? And if he were scheming for my wealth——" "I did not say that," he murmured, calmly; but without heeding she continued—"would that be any reason why he should get it? Aided by your 'long experience,'"—Valmont felt this thrust beneath his external calmness—"you may have seen much more than I—perhaps a small bit more than there is to see."

Angry at so sudden an arraignment of her feelings, and angrier still that evil motives should be attributed to her friends, there was little of the scorn and sarcasm of which her nature was capable that was not expressed in her face and voice. "Whatever you may or may not have noticed in that gentleman's manner, you have not, I think,

discovered anything in mine to warrant criticism. If you think you have, you mistake me. I am 'heart whole and fancy free,' and so good-night." She arose; but without exercising undue haste; he reached the door before her.

"Just one word more before you go, May," he said, holding the door open, but not wide enough to let her pass out. "You remember I told you that what I had to say was on general principles, and doubtless without direct application; I would ask you to remember that though I am your guardian I shall not try to control you in any way, and by and by, when I cease to hold that relationship, such control will be impossible. But the long experience to which you have referred fits me to advise; and my advice may be of service to you. Do not hesitate to ask my help if you find yourself in need of it; and now, good-night and pleasant dreams."

"Good-night," she responded, more pleasantly. He opened the door wider, and she left him.

But when he had closed the door again, he stood for some moments with one hand on the knob, reflecting on the interview; and his thoughts were an unpleasant mixture of foreboding and self-blame. His stepdaughter's voice and manner—even her words, had forced upon him the unpleasant conviction that in her regard Mr. Huntingford stood far higher than Mr. Gripleigh, and that the latter would have a hard struggle to usurp the other's place.

It was now too late for him to inquire why he

had not foreseen and prepared for this complication, which so seriously menaced the success of his schemes. As he could not compel his step-daughter to obey him in the matter, it remained for him only to assure himself that he had done everything possible to suggest doubts of Mr. Huntingford's purposes, and to insinuate advice. He would hope for the best.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### BOMBS.

The sun of the next morning ushered in a day that Mr. Valmont, if he had been one to associate evils with time and place, would have draped with black in his memory; and later, when the forces then set in motion had had time to manifest themselves and indicate their result, he must have regarded it as the most portentous day of his life.

While he was sitting with the other members of his household at the breakfast-table, the morning's mail was handed to him.

It was his custom to read his letters at this time; so, excusing himself, he went about it, having first carefully sorted the epistles to the best of his judgment into four classes—business, political, social, and unknown.

While Mr. Gripleigh exerted himself to amuse Miss Larned, and while Miss Waithe, sitting in solemn majesty behind the coffee-urn, was re-

ligiously fulfilling her duty as proxy for the hostess, Mr. Valmont opened and read letter after letter, until he came near to the bottom of the heap, among the unknown correspondents, and took up a letter over which he paused some time, studying the superscription. There was an indefinable something about it that seemed familiar, although the envelope was ordinary in appearance, and the address was written in a clear, common-place hand.

After a moment's study he laid the letter down, sipped his coffee, ate a morsel of bread, then took it up again and quietly cut the envelope.

At the first words a startled look came into his face, and the knife with which he had been opening his letters fell from his hand. But the noise of its fall recalled him to himself, and the startled look vanished. He took up his coffee; not to drink, but that he might use the action as a cover to the furtive glances he cast into his companions' faces. Finding, to his gratification, that they had not observed his emotion, he remained for some time passively listening to their conversation, as if he dreaded to look at the letter again. But at last, realizing that it must be done, he opened and read it to the end. This time his well-schooled face gave no sign.

This was the letter, italicized after the feminine manner:

“NEW YORK, ———.

“MY QUONDAM ‘HUBBY’: Confess, dear, that you didn't expect to get this letter. Perhaps a

little alarmed, but don't be so. Of course one would be alarmed a little by a letter from one's wife who was long thought dead. And you *did* think me dead, didn't you Jacob? and that that was my *ghost* you saw four or five years ago playing at the Grand Opera? You did not think I saw you, did you? And you staid bravely through the first act, didn't you? But I did see and recognize you, and saw that your seat was empty after that act. How did you like me? *Very much*, I hope! Say you did at any rate—it will please me so much. But I know how you hate long letters, so I will cut mine short and come to business.

“Now, don't be alarmed, dear, at what I am going to say; you need have no fear. I'm coming up to see you—don't start. Think a moment; I have known all about you for a long time. If I had wished I could have made it *very lively* for you years ago, and that ought to be proof that I do not now intend to disturb your sweet repose. You are welcome to all you got from me. I bought experience with my money, and I got its value. Keep it and welcome. Why am I coming to see you, then? To renew old friendship, etc.? O dear, no! In some strange way the fancy has taken me, and I'm coming. You can tell them—(I don't know whom '*them*' means)—but you may call me your sister when I come, or anything else you like; only, unless you see me first, and tell me your plans, I shall let them understand that I *am* your sister—an actress, whose private name is Valmont, and whose profession has estranged her from her family, but who is now determined to win them back. Now don't shake your head, dear, or rather, don't *want* to! for you would not do so indiscreet a thing if anybody could see you,

—

I know. I'm coming, and it will be much better if your plans are mine.

"Your affectionate 'sister,'

"JUDITH REITZ.

"P. S.—What *would* a woman do without a postscript?

"I shall, in all probability, be with you almost as soon as my letter, as I post it to-day, and leave to-morrow morning. It would be *too bad* if you were unavoidably absent from home, as you would miss *such a good time*.

"JUDITH."

When the reading was ended, Valmont raised his eyes to the faces of the others, as if about to speak. But he did not seem to be quite sure of his voice, so he said nothing until, breakfast being finished, they arose from the table; then taking Miss Larned to one side, he said:

"We are going to receive a visit from my sister."

"Your sister!" repeated the girl in amazement. "I did not know that you had a sister."

Valmont had foreseen this difficulty and was prepared to face it.

"There are few of us that have no subjects on which we prefer to be silent. Looking at what happened years ago in the calm light of the present I think that my sister did right; yet it estranged her from her family, and that is the reason why I have never spoken of her to you." He did not say what it was that caused this estrangement; but leaving May to find her own

explanation, turned to the others and informed them of the expected visit.

Many and various were the expressions of surprise that his announcement called forth. Many and widely different were the unspoken thoughts that came to the minds of his hearers; but Mr. Valmont was too busy with his own perplexing cogitations to enlighten them further. The expected "sister" would arrive that afternoon. The intervening time was short, and in it there was much to be done—much more to be done than he had any idea of at that time. Had she any object in visiting him other than the one mentioned in her letter? Would her stay be long or short? These were questions in which he found ample food for anxious thoughts.

This was the first unpleasant surprise of that day-to-be-draped-in-black.

Soon, Valmont and his friend Gripleigh were seated in the buggy, and speeding toward the mine.

They had little to say to each other, and expressed even that little in monosyllables; until Gripleigh, starting from a reverie, laid his hand heavily on Valmont's knee, and speaking in the tone of one that has suddenly reached a conclusion, asked, "Do you know who this Huntingford is?"

"No," cried Valmont, shaking off his unpleasant thoughts with a startled effort; "that is, not in the sense you evidently mean."

"His face is very familiar to me," Gripleigh

continued, while Valmont watched his expression with anxious interest. "I was sure that I had seen him before; I have been thinking of it ever since I met him, and have placed him at last."

"Well?" queried Valmont impatiently.

"He is the junior partner of the Wells-Larned Company," Gripeigh answered deliberately, emphasizing every word.

"Then—what then?" asked Valmont sharply, as if unwilling to accept the covert meaning of the other's words.

"It means this," Gripeigh answered, speaking now as if thinking aloud: "that his visit to these quiet scenes is not so innocent as it appears. The firm has discovered something of our schemes, and he has been sent to investigate them. He has visited the mine?" inquiringly.

"Yes," Valmont assented, his stern face becoming forbidding and dangerous. Ominous clouds were rising above his horizon, so lately clear, and rosy with the light of ambition almost realized. Black shadows were creeping near. "Yes," he said again; "he has been there—been down the shaft, I believe."

"That's nice! That's very nice!" Gripeigh muttered in a tone that belied the literal meaning of his words. "In view of this delightful event, I may say, without fear of contradiction, that unless we do something immediately, our scheme will be knocked higher than Gil'roy's kite."

"Something must be done then," said Valmont;



and there was plenty of harsh determination in his voice—"and quickly, too—but what?"

"The question is," commented Gripeigh, "how much does our friend know?"

At this Valmont was silent; for there was another, to his mind, still more vital question; and he sought long and studiously for a plan to discover whether Huntingford—supposing him to know anything to their disadvantage—had made anyone else a sharer in his knowledge. Had he told the firm anything?—that was the question. If he had, then the fulfillment of Gripeigh's prophecy was a foregone conclusion; for they could not hope to deceive so many interested persons. If he had not, then they had to deal with him alone; and a single enemy might be managed. However, if by chance Huntingford knew and suspected nothing, he must be kept from such things as would arouse his suspicions.

They arrived at the mine.

"Mr. Slack," said Valmont, addressing the book-keeper, as he entered the office, "has Croitier come for his pay yet?"

"Yes, sir; he is waiting for you in your private office. I told him you wanted to see him."

"Very good," the manager returned. "Is he sober?"

"I think so," answered the book-keeper; "he has not been out since I paid him."

Mr. Valmont reflected for a moment; then turned to Gripeigh: "Frederick, I am going to discharge this man for insolence to Mr. Hunting-

ford in the mine last week. I think I had better see him in private, if you will excuse me for a few moments."

"Certainly," answered the broker, easily comprehending the situation. "I'll go in and pay my respects to Brown. Don't hurry yourself on my account."

They entered the superintendent's office together, and with a brief "good-morning" to Mr. Brown, Valmont passed into his private room, closing the door behind him.

Croitier was reading the morning's paper, but immediately arose and stood, hat in hand, waiting for his employer to speak. But Valmont seated himself at his desk and began to write without appearing to notice the Frenchman. The latter waited in silence during several minutes; then thinking that the manager had probably not seen him, advanced to the desk, and said:

"M'sieur Slack say zat ze manager will speak wiz me."

"I will attend to you directly; don't you see that I am busy?" said Valmont curtly, without raising his eyes.

Croitier shrugged his shoulders and returned to his newspaper.

Presently Valmont finished his writing, blotted the paper, wiped his pen, and faced around.

"Croitier!" the tone was so sharp that the Frenchman started—"I have decided to discharge you."

Croitier sprang to his feet—"But, M'sieur!—"

"Not a word! You insulted a gentleman in the mine last week, and he has complained of you. You are a good foreman; but we can't afford to have such things happening around here."

"But, sir, he have break ze rule to take nothing from ze shaft."

"That makes no difference; it does not excuse insolence. You were properly punished."

An angry flush came into the Frenchman's face, as he muttered between his teeth. "It is an insult which he shall repay to me, if the fate permit!"

"No threats!" said the manager warningly. "It is a matter of absolute indifference to me whether you swallow the injury, and allow him to walk over you at his ease, or pay him back with interest. That is a matter for you to settle between yourselves; but I can not keep you in my employment."

"Sir, cried Croitier, straightening himself and coming close to the desk, "you have commanded zat I make no threat; *bien!* I speak not, but I act!"

A faint smile flitted across the manager's features. "As I have said, I fully recognize your good qualities, and may be able, by and by, to use you in other ways. Meanwhile, you may come here every Monday for the present, and if I find a place for you I will let you know. Take this paper to Mr. Slack, and he will pay you an extra week's wages." He handed Croitier the

paper he had written and arose. "As for Huntingford, who knocked you down the other day, I'd advise you to keep out of his way, as he is passionate and hits hard."

"Merci!—Merci, M'sieur! You make me your servant forever. For ze r-rascal who have insult me, we have not finished!"

"Well, I have nothing to do with that; but, as your friend Huntingford may be expected to come spying around here at any moment, I would advise you to keep away from the place. Good-morning."

Croitier seized his hat and slouched out of the office, muttering to himself.

As he disappeared, the smile of satisfaction returned to Mr. Valmont's face. He had found Croitier apt. It was a relief after the gloom that the two bodeful surprises of the morning had spread above him, to find here at last a rift in the clouds through which even this doubtful daylight could shine upon him; for he saw that the task of giving Huntingford a warm reception, should that gentleman venture on a second visit to the mine, had passed into the proper hands, and one taste of the hospitality that Croitier was preparing would suffice.

On this one side Valmont now regarded himself as protected. If Huntingford knew nothing as yet, his chances of learning anything by visiting the mine again were not worth considering. It remained for him to find out, if possible, whether Huntingford had communicated anything to the company.

It required but a short time to look over the business of the day; and then the two schemers returned at the best speed of the horses to Adairsville.

On reaching home, Valmont at once paid a visit to the postmaster, well knowing that from him might be learned everything discoverable about Huntingford's correspondence.

Valmont's face was a stern, impenetrable mask, betraying nothing that he desired to conceal; but his gratification was none the less keen, when, by a guarded questioning of the postmaster, he learned that Mr. Huntingford had as yet received no mail, and that no letter had passed through that office to the Wells-Larned Company. If Mr. Huntingford had any knowledge of the way in which the mine was managed he had not shared it with the New York people; and, as such inaction was very improbable, Valmont considered himself safe in concluding that Huntingford had as yet discovered nothing.

He had still another trial before him. He must go in person to meet the wife whom he had defrauded and deserted years before. What the result of that meeting would be he did not venture to guess. She had not yet molested him, and it was in keeping with her character to pay him this visit as a "spicy" diversion for her idle time, now that her professional duties were ended for the summer. Still, it was equally possible that she had a hostile purpose.

He had passed successfully through the other

trials of the day. The dark clouds of the morning were beginning to show a silver lining. From these happy issues he augured that this remaining trial of his will power would also result favorably.

Arriving at the station among the first comers, he drew rein at the back of the building, and sat in his buggy waiting. The people began to gather, some dressed for traveling, others expecting friends; and as they gathered, the place grew noisy with their restless tramping up and down the platform. The Adairsville stage arrived, and backed up to one end of the platform, close beside Valmont. There was a banging about of trunks, a rushing to and fro of passengers in his neighborhood; then it grew comparatively quiet again, when the travelers had secured their tickets and attended to the checking of their baggage.

But the man in the buggy was totally oblivious to all sights and sounds, until he heard a far-off shriek of the locomotive whistle, warning him that his hour of trial was at hand. Calling an idle lad to watch his horses, he drew a deep breath of determination, and walking around to the front of the platform, selected an advantageous place from which to watch the passengers as they left the train.

Soon the rails began to ring, a locomotive dashed out of the woods down the road, and in a moment, with a confusion of noises, the train stopped at the station, and passengers came streaming from every door. Valmont saw the

woman he had come to meet. She was one to have fixed the attention of the most careless observer. Her dress, though quiet and tasteful, was still sufficiently pronounced to attract notice. Her form, though not majestic—in fact, a little under size—seemed perfect. Her face was not beautiful, but pretty; and above all, bright, attractive, and pleasant to look upon, despite the tinge that stage paints leave upon the skin. Her hair was wavy, and of a reddish-brown color. Her eyes were large, dark, and independent, yet not bold—and full of fun and sparkle; although at that instant their expression was thoughtful and inquiring. A true actress she was—even young, and the personification of grace, yet with tell-tale threads of silver in her hair; and as such the physiognomist would have recognized her.

Left by Valmont so poor that she was forced to work for sustenance, she turned to the stage, and there struggling along painfully enough for a time, grew gradually into public favor, until no she possessed, as fruits of that hard struggle, a modest fortune, and above all the ability to make herself independent, which is better than stolen and bonds, for it can not be filched away. The bargain was forced upon her; yet at the price of heart-aches, prayers, and tears, she bought at last a tranquil comfort that could not be destroyed, and fame besides—the honor and praise of men. And this may be the reason—this feeling of comfort and ease—why she was willing to forego revenge on him, who, although the direct cause

of her misery, had been also the indirect cause of her present tranquillity. The pain was past—almost forgotten, in the comfort and mental repose of her present life. But whatever the reason, she did forego revenge, and she came to Adairsville, as her letter asserted, for change and excitement. The situation in which she would find herself as guest of a man whom she held in her power promised to be sufficiently interesting to satisfy her desire.

Although somewhat different in face and manner from the woman he deserted, Valmont recognized her at once; and more—something of the tenderness that he felt for her when they were young together rolled back upon him. Call him not weak and vacillating! With time to think, he would have repeated the crime. His ambition, his life's purpose, were unchanged, although temporarily darkened by the anxious cares that had beset the day. For the moment, discontent with the results already gained, and doubt of the future, held sway over him; and as they clouded the prospect, so much the brighter, the more to be desired, seemed the happy life he might have lived with her.

The actress was not slow to discover him moving toward her through the crowd, and she recognized him with a little nod. He caught the greeting, and returned it with as pleased a look as his grim visage could show. Yet the meeting was not quite what he had hoped for. There was a quizzical look in her eyes, and a half tantalizing



smile on her lips, as she laid a passive hand in his. He bent over her, and in a voice wonderfully soft, and with a face strangely tender, murmured for her ears, in the midst of the people, "And so we meet again, after these many years. How hard to bear they have been for us both!"

"Why, Jacob, how sentimental we have grown in these hard years!" she retorted, looking up saucily.

His face instantly hardening, showed how accurately her arrow had found its mark. He was unprepared for such an answer, and had nothing to say, nothing to do, but to lead her to the carriage.

"You have baggage?" he asked.

"Yes, this is the check;" drawing one from her pocket.

Valmont gave the check to the stage driver, with instructions to bring the trunk to the village, and handing his companion into the buggy, followed her.

"Remember," he said, "I am not to be trifled with. You should know that."

"Nor am I—now," she answered meaningly. "I come here for change, for rest, for excitement, for the air, or what you will—only, as yet I have no intention of harming you. If you agree to that, and do not try to oppose me, well and good; if not"—she paused.

"If not, then what?" Valmont asked, watching her face closely. But it told him nothing, except that she was more beautiful than in her youth.

"Then what?" she echoed mockingly, breaking into a merry laugh so full of witchery that, in spite of himself, Valmont felt the love glamor of his younger days stealing over him again.

Struggling with this feeling; scorning himself that it should quicken his heart-beats after so many years—he held his peace. But the woman beside him was a Jewess—a daughter of that race whose glory was the mainspring of his ambition; and for the moment he forgot the absorbing game he played with fate; forgot that ambition—even the danger this woman might bring him.

Sympathy, or rather the longing for it—into what idle dreams will it not sometimes beguile even the most cold and calculating? Dreams of glory, schemes for power, vanished like sundried mist; and Valmont for an instant saw himself as he really was—a Jew among Gentiles, estranged from all human ties. The mask of coldness and restraint was partly lifted from his face, and something of the man himself—his thoughts and feelings—was visible beneath it.

"Judith," he murmured softly; "have you no forgiveness for me?" He saw the sharp, angry flashes kindling in her eyes, and though his heart sank, he continued, lifting his hand to stay her words, "Do you know how I have toiled for the future of our people?"

"Bah!" she answered; and the little word was full of sarcastic force, however lacking in elegance. Then, seeing that Valmont's face was becoming cold and severe again, she added, "So; that is

better. Why disturb the past, or the future? I shall not bother you long. Why try to trick me into believing in you?"

"It was no trick," he answered sternly; "I meant it!"

"As you will! But if I am to be your sister, had you not better tell me something of the people I shall meet?" she asked.

The old dread of her husband had in a measure returned. She realized that he would not be so easy to manage as she had thought. Some idea of his ruthless purposes had been dimly suggested, and she felt that she was on dangerous, treacherous ground, yet too far advanced for retreat.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE SKELETON UNCOVERED.

Fate delights in preparing simultaneously her merits and her rewards, her crimes and her punishments; and as shadow accompanies substance, so, were our sight sufficiently subtle, we should discover cause and effect traveling as companions, and retribution treading upon the very heels of wrong-doing.

Did Fate mingle herself in the affairs of Valmont and Gripeigh?—Does Fate interfere in the affairs of mortals?

Our fathers, in the days before men were wise enough to find out that they could know

nothing, and therefore before it was possible for such a wise creature as an agnostic to exist, were accustomed in naming this "Divinity that shapes our ends," to call it God. But we have changed all that; and now, in the mouths of those that would be very exact, it is the "Supreme Unknowable" that rules our destinies, while on the lips of ordinary mortals, it is "Fate." Whatever or whoever it may be that sees to such things in this world, certain it is that the punishment of wickedness has not gone altogether out of fashion, and that grapes do not grow on thorns nor figs on thistles to-day any more commonly than they did eighteen centuries ago.

When Orestes lay gasping on the earth, felled by a blow from the lawless god, he had no doubts about his wound—he suffered, therefore he gasped; and whether there were or were not gods, he probably never stopped to question—at least Homer is silent concerning any such speculations. But we are wiser! We feel the stroke and writhe with the pain; we know the evil deed that merited it, and our souls justify the retribution—and then we turn upon our minds, and bodies, and souls, and convince them by an infallible system of logical circles that there is no God, and therefore no blow, and therefore no pain, and therefore no evil, and therefore no retribution, and therefore, lastly, that Fate alone is the author of our mischances.

Jacob Valmont might soon have use for this admirable system of logic, when, the blow having

fallen, he should remember the Rabbi's warning: "The fruit of fraud is judgment, and evil works can not prosper in the sight of God;" for, on the very day that he and his worthy companion were laying their plans for consummating the fraud they had been plotting, the spark was laid to the train that should undo them.

Doctor Wayne and his guest breakfasted later than usual that morning, and the old gentleman in opening his mail came upon a letter that he handed to Huntingford with the remark, "Here is the answer you are expecting."

Huntingford took it eagerly; "Mr. Wells never wastes time," he said.

After reading it through carefully, he handed it back to the Doctor, who in turn read it, stopping often to comment upon it.

The writer, after commending Mr. Huntingford's method, informed him that the company in New York had not been idle in the meanwhile, but by means of cautious inquiries had learned that during the past year a large number of shares of the Wanoto Mining Company's stock—apparently taken from the Larned holding—had been placed, in a block, upon the market, through Mr. Valmont's private brokers, Snowden & Gripeigh; and that during the past month a larger number of shares had been bought in again, a few at a time, through the same firm, at greatly reduced prices.

"In the light of these disclosures, supplemented by your advices"—the letter continued—"there

can be no reasonable doubt that a systematic effort is on foot to depress the value of the property, while it seems also that an attempt is making to mass the stock and secure a voting majority at the annual election of directors, and so obtain control of the property. The Larned estate, while not holding an absolute majority of the stock, owns an interest large enough to dictate easily the management of the property, and doubtless the manipulators count upon controlling this interest at the approaching meeting of stockholders to further their schemes. What might follow such an event can be, of course, only surmised; but it is fair to presume that a manager that has not scrupled to manipulate his trust for his personal ends, and has not been too honorable to depreciate for his own aggrandizement the value of the property in his care, would not be likely to hesitate to prejudice his ward's interests in other ways, if such a course would serve his private aims.

“Prompt action is, therefore, necessary; Miss Larned should be placed upon her guard; and my advice is that she be informed at once of our suspicions concerning her guardian. If, after learning the facts, she elects to trust him further, it will be her affair; but, for ourselves, we will be freed from the burden of responsibility as early as we may. We deem it incumbent upon us to protect ourselves by withdrawing from Mr. Valmont's bond as soon as the court will relieve us, and meanwhile send you legal authority to ask,

as our proxy, a showing of the company's books, which, as stockholders, we have the right to demand.

"This will serve as preliminary to the slower action of the court, to which we have already applied for relief, and which will undoubtedly require from the manager a full statement of the company's affairs.

"In the course of your labors you may find the assistance of a lawyer necessary; if so, we can probably induce Mr. Heaton to run up a few days to assist you; but will not send him unless you consider it indispensable."

Then followed detailed instructions and advice; the letter closing with an assurance that the company had entire confidence in Mr. Huntingford, and intrusted the affair wholly to his discretion.

"Well," said the Doctor, in decided tones; "there is at present but one thing to do; let us send for May. It will be easier to consult with her here than in Valmont's house."

To this proposition the young man assented; and the Doctor called Chang. The Mongolian quickly presented himself.

"Close the door, Chang," said the Doctor, "and listen attentively."

The yellow-tinted servant pushed the door shut noiselessly, and coming close to the old gentleman, watched his face intently.

"Now Chang, my boy," said the latter, impressively, "I am going to send you to Miss Larned on an important errand. I want her to

come over here immediately; but no one at Mr. Valmont's house must suspect that I have sent for her. Can you manage it?"

"Less," answered the Chinaman confidently, with a knowing smile.

"Then go at once," said the Doctor; and almost ere the sentence was finished Chang had gone.

As swiftly as his short legs could carry him, he hurried down the square to Valmont's house, where he proceeded at once to place his head in the lion's mouth—that is to say, in Miss Waithe's kitchen.

Now, that lady, though she knew Chang well, entertained any rather than kindly feelings for him. In fact, with the same serene consciousness of the personal sodality of Divinity with her and her opinions that moved the virtuous Mather to class his red neighbors among the servants of His Infernal Majesty, Miss Waithe looked upon all foreigners—pagan, papistical, or merely different from herself in language—as heathen, or "nex' door to 'em." Heathen in the abstract, considered simply as heathen, she, of course, regarded as fitting objects for Christian charity, in the shape of tracts, Bibles, and interesting missionaries; but she wished them, out of regard for common decency, to remain in their own benighted heathen lands, where the omniscient wisdom of the Almighty has placed them, and there patiently to await His good time for their enlightenment. Chang was, therefore, in her eyes, not only a heathen of the



deepest dye, but a rebellious heathen besides, that had flown in the face of Providence by the very act of leaving China; and when she beheld his yellow face, lighted up with its brown, almond-shaped eyes, and the carefully plaited black pig-tail that adorned his otherwise shaven head, it was to her as if Moloch himself had dropped in to bid her good-morning.

Chang, on the other hand, was, in his quick mind, fully aware of Miss Waithe's antipathy, and probably of its origin; and in any other cause but the service of his adored "Doctaline"—as he called his master—would have refused to hold any communication with the grim lady. But he had more than a full share of the adaptability of his race, and had not associated so many years with the wise Doctor, nor studied so assiduously the language, customs, and literature of his adopted "Melica," without profit. His pronunciation was not yet perfect, and it is improbable that life—long practice and study could ever familiarize his tongue with the difficult "R's" and "V's" of the English language; but his speech was quite intelligible and his vocabulary was large.

He stopped in the doorway, and removing his hat, made an elaborately grave and deferential bow in true Oriental style to the occupant of the kitchen.

"Land sakes alive!" cried Miss Waithe, startled out of her maidenly composure, and well-nigh overturning the pan of potatoes in her lap; "its that Chineese, Mr. Chang!"

"Mr. Chang" smiled blandly, showing all his teeth, and made another exaggerated obeisance, before he answered.

"Less, Miss Lait; its Chang. How-de-do, Miss Lait?" Then he cast a hasty glance around the kitchen, and his features settled into an expression of innocent wonder as he continued, "Ev'ly fling so clean here! Mis' Fink; oh, no! Mis' Fink, she can't keep things bright like that! Little one, ley bling much dirt in the house."

This sly compliment touched Miss Waithe in a tender spot. It was at once a tribute—all the more telling because it came from a "yaller heathen"—to her genius in housewifery, and a comparison not odious. So she responded more graciously:

"Cleanliness is nex' door to godliness, Mr. Chang; an' if one's mind is right sot on hev'in' things clean, clean they'll be; an' no amount of childern in the whole world kin prevent 'em from so bein'. But law sakes! here I'm a lettin' you stand at the door—forgittin' manners! Do walk in, Mr. Chang, and take a cheer!"

"Flankeel!" the Chinaman returned. "I like to wery much, but I must hully. I bling a book for Miss Larned; Miss Larned, she home?"

"Oh, yes, I guess she's som'ers around the garding. Not doin' nothin' useful, I'll be bound; most likely readin' some outlandish poem-book, or pullin' posies to scatter their leaves about the house for me to clean up after her. If you'll jest set down a minnit, I'll call one o' the galls from churnin', to fetch her."

"Oh, no, Miss Lait, lat's no need; I go find Miss Larned. Mr. Huntingford flink maybe she like to play tennis to-day," answered the disingenous Chinaman.

"Very well, jest 's you like, Mr. Chang. I guess you'll find her in the garding; an' I expect she'd like mighty well to play that crazy ball game with a fish-net and coal-sifters; she's allus peart enough for anything tiresome that hain't work." With which ungenerous fling at the absent one, Miss Waithe resumed her potato-pearing, while Chang went to find Miss Larned.

He found her with Judith, reading in a hammock swung between two apple-trees in the garden.

"Well, Chang," said the young lady, when she saw him approaching; "do you want me? Is anything the matter at the Doctor's?"

Chang glanced distrustfully at Judith, and hesitated. Then, with a show of indecision, he drew from his pocket a little book he had picked up as he left the Doctor's library:

"Doctalaine send lis back, and much flanks," he said, still keeping his eyes fixed meaningly on Judith.

"Is there nothing else?" asked May. "He need not have taken so much trouble about this—" then, examining the book, she saw it was not hers. She glanced up with some surprise; but the look on Chang's face repressed her intended comment.

"What is it, dear?" asked Judith, reaching for the volume.

The instant the older woman's attention was diverted, Chang made a quick, meaning gesture, that May easily interpreted as a request for a private interview. So, excusing herself to Judith, she followed the Chinaman a short distance toward the house. Here the latter explained his errand, and cautioned Miss Larned against letting anyone suspect that her visit to Doctor Wayne's house was of more than ordinary importance. "I fix it all light to Miss Lait," he explained. "I say you come to play tennis."

"But you ought to tell the truth always, Chang," said May, in gentle reproof. "I'm sorry you deceived her."

Chang laughed. "It is good to tell the truth—most always. Sometimes it is not so good—a little lie do a big blisiness. Allee samee, you can play, if you like—len I not lie; see?"

May smiled, in spite of herself. "Well," she returned, "tell the Doctor I will come over as soon as I can get dressed." And Chang was off in an instant.

Having no clue to the Doctor's reason for wishing to see her at his own house, Miss Larned was in a state of great anxiety when she met him on the veranda.

"What is it, Doctor?" she exclaimed, all excitement. "Has anything happened? Is anyone hurt?" For, somehow, a remote, unformed fear that Huntingford might be injured had lodged itself in some shadowy corner of her heart.

"No," answered the Doctor, as he took her

hand; "no one is hurt or sick; only Mr. Huntingford and I have found it necessary to consult with you on an important matter of business, and I sent for you because we could not speak freely at your home."

The quiet assurance that Mr. Huntingford was safe afforded the girl some relief; but the Doctor's face was so grave, and the look he fixed upon her was so strangely tender and compassionate, that she still felt oppressed with a vague sense of impending evil when she followed the old man into the library. She shook hands with the younger man, who rose to meet her.

Very gently the Doctor endeavored to prepare her for the story of her step-father's treachery; and certainly it was, as he assured her, the most painful duty he had ever been called upon to perform.

May listened as quietly as she could to this preamble, heroically controlling her agitation; and there was even a tone of reproach in her voice, as she asked:

"Do you, then, think me so blind, so forgetful, as to doubt your kindness, Doctor? Do you think that I do not realize what you have been to me all my life? Oh, my dearest friend, you need never explain your motives to me!"

"And Mr. Huntingford?" urged the old man. "He is the chief agent in this sad business; and I wish you to realize, as I do, his disinterestedness and friendship."

A faint flush mounted to the girl's cheeks as

she turned toward Huntingford; and there was, possibly, more than confidence expressed in the impulsive gesture with which she extended to him a tremulous little hand. She said, simply:

"I have trusted Mr. Huntingford from the first moment I saw him."

The young man, though deeply troubled by the task before him, felt a sudden rush of happy emotion at these words and the look that accompanied them. Yet they embarrassed him strangely, and he scarcely dared to steal one swift glance into the brown eyes resting so trustfully upon his face. The pressure of his hand, however, was eloquent of thanks, and it needed none of his unspoken words to interpret his feelings to May.

The Doctor then related the history of Mr. Valmont's betrayal of trust, placing before the girl clearly and succinctly the moral aspects and the legal consequences of the case, and finally read to her the letter from Mr. Wells.

Miss Larned listened, without interruption, to the end. She had never loved her step-father, though she had dutifully striven to nourish an affection for him. He had never taught her to trust him, nor to confide in him. This painful revelation, therefore, brought her none of that cruel, despairing bitterness that comes from the betrayal of the secure confidence of love. But, unsympathetic as he had ever been with her; cold, self-contained, and repellant as he had ever seemed to her—she had, at least, always respected

him as an honorable man, and had schooled her heart into reverencing the noble qualities of justice, truth, and integrity with which she believed him to be endued. Therefore, the overthrow of even this unloved idolon, had in it for the generous heart and honest mind of the girl something exceedingly sad and disheartening. Who has not suffered a similar shock from the downfall of some respected name, even though he that bore it was a stranger? And how much deeper has sunk the blind sense of humiliation, when the offender has been one that we have known in the counting-room, or perhaps over our own table! Then, if our human sympathies are so sensitive to the misdeeds of strangers or mere acquaintances; if, in the degradation of our human kindred, however remote, we feel a personal shame—how much more keenly must we feel the disgrace of one with whom we have lived daily during long years—one whose hand we have taken a thousand times, and who has been a part of our life's history. Such were May's feelings when she learned that her dead mother's husband had proved himself a common scoundrel—worse than an ordinary forger or defaulter, in that he had deliberately betrayed the sacred trust of his dead wife, and had planned to defraud an orphaned girl, whom all the instincts of manhood, honor, and duty should inspire him to protect. Were there, then, she asked herself, no such realities in the world as honor and disinterestedness? Had every man, as some cynic has asserted, his price—so much for an easy rogue,

and so much more for a "man of honor?" An involuntary glance at Doctor Wayne's grave, kind face and Huntingford's frank, sympathetic countenance, answered her. Faith flashed like a burst of sunlight through her dismal musings, and under its glad rays doubt found no abiding place in her soul. Sweet, womanly trust shone in her eyes when, at last, she turned to the two men and said piteously:

"I am so ignorant in these matters that I do not know what I ought to do. I care little enough for the money, and would have given it to him gladly if he had only asked it—oh, you don't know how gladly I would have given it if it would have made him kinder and gentler to me. What shall I do? Maybe it is not yet too late. I will go to him and tell him to take it all! But I want to do what is right. Doctor, my dear, wise father, tell me what I shall do!"

"I would advise," said the old man, taking her hand tenderly in his own, "that you leave everything to Mr. Huntingford; you can trust him to do what is right, I am sure."

"But I do not want to injure Mr. Valmont!" cried the girl, pleadingly. "Please let me give him the money! He may have troubles that we know nothing of; you know he never tells his affairs to anyone. Yes, that will be the best; won't it? Oh, say yes! It is so sudden and terrible that I can hardly realize the meaning of all you have told me."

The Doctor's face was graver when he answered:



"It is not for the sake of the mere money, my dear child, that I advise you to let Mr. Huntingford proceed—that is a trifle, for I have enough to make you comfortable all your life; nor is it simply because he is guilty of wrong—alas! many good men have gone astray under pressure—but it is the nature of the crime he seems to have planned. Such a crime is unpardonable among men. If he be innocent—which is scarcely supposable—he will not be hurt by the investigation; and if he is guilty, he deserves neither mercy nor pity. We dare not be merciful, my poor girl, where mercy means the compounding of a felony."

May wrung her hands helplessly. "Oh, Doctor, what shall I do?—what shall I do? It is all so terrible! so cruel!"

"Listen to Mr. Huntingford," said the old man, releasing her hand. She turned, with tear-brimmed eyes, to the younger man, clasping her hands appealingly.

Huntingford came close to her, and his voice trembled as he said, very low:

"I hope you will believe, Miss Larned, that the part I am taking in this is unselfish, and that above all else I place my regard for you."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried the distracted girl; "I know that you are my good, true friend."

Huntingford quietly took the clasped hands in his own, and continued gently: "Can you, then, trust me so far as to place it in my hands entirely? If you can not, I will leave the duty to someone else; for I will not—no, I can not, act without

your full approval. It is an unpleasant task, at the best, and but for my earnest wish to serve you, I would far rather give place to some other agent."

The sincerity of the young man's words and looks acted like a charm in calming the girl's excitement; and looking up with perfect confidence, she said:

"I trust you fully; do as you think best."

"Thank you," he returned, pressing slightly and then releasing her hands. "Believe me, I shall prove worthy of your faith. And now, Doctor," turning to the old man, "my course is clear; I will go to the mine to-morrow morning, and request a showing of the books. Mr. Grip-leigh will probably be there; but that will make no difference. Do you approve of the plan?"

"Perfectly," answered the Doctor. And now, my dear," addressing May, "you also have your part to perform. It will be hard; but you are good and brave, and can do it, I know. You will have to act at home as if nothing had happened, and must keep from every one there any suspicion of this interview. Let them note no change in you; look as usual, talk as usual, go to the hop this evening as you intended."

"Oh, I can't do that, Doctor! I have no heart for it, after what I have heard!"

"But it is necessary, my child. Your absence would occasion remark, and Mr. Valmont might divine the cause of your trouble. This must be

avoided; for until he has been proved guilty we owe it to him to cast no shadow of suspicion upon him."

"I shall be sick; I have a headache now, and would rather stay away," she urged.

"All the more reason why you should go; the excitement will keep you from brooding," said the Doctor. "Besides, I know Mr. Huntingford expects to see you there."

"Yes, my dear Miss Larned; I count on you to make the evening pleasant for me. Without you it would be simply intolerable," the young man hastened to protest.

"If you would only excuse me," May began, turning once more to him.

But he held up his hand, and shook his head. "Believe me, it is not for my sake alone I want to see you there; though I shall take the lion's share of your time, if you will let me;" and in his eyes there was more than friendship, as he looked down into her face.

"Well," May responded, yielding, "I will go."

In the meantime, the two friends at the mine, imagining themselves secure, were engaged in furthering their delightful schemes.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## AT THE HOP.

"There, I think that will answer," Judith said, as, having placed a Jacqueminot in Miss Larned's hair, she gave it a final pat to fasten it more securely, and stepped back to study the effect. "Now, if you could manage to get rid of the seriousness that has taken possession of you since your call upon Doctor Wayne this afternoon, your 'make-up' would be the best there."

"But we are not going on the stage," attempting a lighter tone, and turning from her mirror.

"Yes, we are," returned the actress: "'Life's but a stage.' Even this little hop—what a funny, awkward word it is, to be sure—will be the scene of some fine acting, or I mistake the character of two or three of the actors that are to take part. But what has happened to make you so serious?"

"But am I serious?" May asked.

"You know you are. Won't you tell me the reason?"

May turned to her mirror again, with a little smile and a shrug, and Judith continued, "You don't care to? Then I must find it out myself. You are too young to be oppressed with trouble. A good friend might help you. You do not quite

trust me as yet; but you will by and by; and you will find me a true friend."

"Shall I?" asked May, impulsively turning to her companion, and opening her arms, while her eyes sparkled with tears.

It was a quick return to the warm friendship—almost love—that had already sprung up between them and from which May had been forced to withdraw since the disclosures of the afternoon suggested suspicion of her guardian's supposed sister, as well as of himself.

The acquaintance of the two women was but a few hours old; but when the heart is willing, the growth of affection is not measured by the dial.

"Will you not tell me the trouble?" Judith asked again.

"I can not, Judith," May answered wearily. Then, as if forced to continue, she added, looking anxiously into her companion's face, "I can not doubt you; I do not believe you know. But I can not tell you. You would be sorry if I did."

This answer set Judith to wondering. "Very well," she said at last, with determination; "then I must find it out myself." Her words and her expression brought comfort and gave the assurance to May's heart that the sister, at least, knew nothing of Mr. Valmont's purposes.

Then Judith changed the subject by asking, "How do you like Mr. Gripeigh?"

"Really, I haven't thought," May answered, fibbing a little, and becoming serious.

"That means that you don't care to tell me,"



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said the other, with a little, self-satisfied laugh.  
 "I don't mind telling you, however, that I do not like him. I can not see him without thinking of Cæsar's speech:

'Yon Cassius hath a lean and hungry look,  
 He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

\* \* \* \* \*

I do not know the man I should avoid  
 So soon as that spare Cassius!

The speech fits him, doesn't it?"

"It does, it does, indeed!" Miss Larned assented thoughtfully, understanding the warning that Judith intended to suggest by the quotation. Then, as if forced to confide to her companion something of her own foreboding, she quoted in answer:

"He is a great observer, and he looks  
 Quite through the deeds of men; he loves no plays  
 As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music:  
 Seldom he smiles; and smiles in such a sort,  
 As if he mocked himself, and scorned his spirit  
 That could be moved to smile at anything."

May's voice, her inflection, and her manner told the listener more than her words.

"Why, Judith, have I struck you dumb?" she asked, after a pause. "I didn't intend to speak so warmly; I hope I haven't shocked you."

"Shocked me, dearest!" Judith cried; "don't dream of such a thing." Placing her arm around May's waist, she drew the girl close and said, "For the word 'music,' read poetry, the arts, all the finer sympathies that make us love our neigh-



bor as ourselves, and you have described the man as I understand him."

They left the room to join the gentlemen upon the veranda; but when they reached the stairs Miss Larned discovered that she had forgotten her fan; and leaving her companion to go down alone, she turned back to get it.

Judith, in the meanwhile, descended the stairs, and arriving at the doorway that opened upon the piazza, looked about for Mr. Valmont and his friend.

They were nowhere to be seen, and she retreated from the doorway into the parlor, to find an easier seat than the piazza chairs afforded. But before she found a chair, she caught the sound of subdued voices.

"There they are, on the side veranda," she thought; and following the sound, she reached the window, and saw Valmont and Gripeigh with their heads together in earnest conversation. They had not heard her, for her light tread was almost noiseless on the thick carpet; and before she could make her presence known, she heard Gripeigh say, "You can not frighten him. This Huntingford is no coward."

The import of the broker's words startled Judith, and she stepped back into the shadow. She felt as if she had come suddenly upon a snake in her path. As she stood there, trembling and irresolute, she heard Valmont answer, "I don't suppose we can; I wish we could; it might save him trouble. If he persists in going to the mine to-

morrow, the penalty of his inquisitiveness will be upon his own head; and after that I don't think he will trouble us, for a time, at least. But there are the ladies," he added in a louder, lighter tone, and rose from his chair, hearing a footstep upon the veranda at the front of the house.

Judith drew a long breath, "So! still plotting!" she thought. "I wonder if this can be the key to May's trouble." She glided hurriedly back across the room, and reached the front door just a moment after the gentlemen joined May.

"Are you quite ready?" she heard Gripleigh ask.

"Yes, quite," the girl answered.

"The hop is being 'hopped' already, I believe," he continued; "the 'society' have been arriving for some time. I think I have heard a rasping fiddle once or twice. But where is Mrs. Reitz?"

"Present!" cried Judith, stepping out of the house.

Mr. Valmont would not accompany them; he would join them later in the evening, he said. In truth, he did not wish to 'hop' at all; but he knew that certain advantages were to be gained from showing himself among the people, and he was not one to slight an opportunity.

After the two ladies had gone away with Gripleigh, he resumed his seat, and sat there alone, pondering the future. The twilight was over, and the light from his cigar now and then dimly discovered a sombre face.

The others walked arm in arm down the street toward the hotel.

"Whom are we to meet that will be interesting?" Judith asked.

"Do you think any of our village aristocracy can be interesting?" May retorted. "If so, they will all be there; and you will find some very pleasant people among them. The Browns and the Smiths, who live at the east end of the park—in fact, everybody that is anybody, and some that are not."

"Will the gentleman that lives in the marble house be there?—Doctor Wayne, I think you called him."

"I doubt it; he's an old man, you know."

"Ah, yes! but I shall be sorry if we do not meet him. You have told me so much about his goodness that I should very much like to know him," Judith returned.

"But he will be represented by his guest, I trust—Mr. Huntingford"—Gripleigh dryly insinuated, glancing at Miss Larned to see if her face betrayed any satisfaction at this suggestion.

Judith, having brought the conversation to the desired point, remarked Gripleigh's tone and look.

"Huntingford? Huntingford?" she murmured, as if puzzled at something the name called to her mind. "It seems to me I have heard that name before. I remember, May, you introduced me to him yesterday. Does he live in the village? How stupid of me! of course not. You were just saying he is a guest of the Doctor," looking into

Gripleigh's face. "What is he doing here?" she asked quickly, still watching for any change in his expression. Disappointed at discovering nothing, she continued: "I presume he is on his vacation, of course?"

They arrived among the guests assembled in the hotel dining-room, where Huntingford met them, and asked May for the waltz that the wheezy orchestra was at that moment playing. She denied him that one, but the refusal was accompanied by a look that fully compensated him for his disappointment. He put his name on her programme for the next and two other dances.

Would Mrs. Reitz waltz? he asked, as Gripleigh and Miss Larned whirled away. No, thanks; she would much prefer a chat; she had heard so much about him from Miss Larned.

"What a lovely girl she is," Judith murmured, as they promenaded arm in arm, following with their eyes the movements of Gripleigh and his partner.

The long, low-studded room bore little resemblance to the elaborate ball-rooms to which Huntingford and his companion—and, in fact, many of the dancers—were accustomed by seasons of winter gaiety in town. Yet it may be doubted whether the most elaborate ball ever attended by any of these city people afforded its participants as much fun and frolic as this unpretentious country hop in the hotel dining-room, with its swinging oil lamps, and the meagre orchestra struggling and wheezing over what they con-

sidered the latest fashionable music, and producing some truly wonderful and original effects. Nor was it to all the guests quite so simple and unpretentious an affair; for, although it was given by the summer boarders in the village to other summer boarders at the hotels among the lakes, many of the residents of Adairsville that had been invited looked upon it as a memorable event.

A city ball off for a rest in the country, like the people that attended it, yet retaining enough characteristic features to be recognizable; as, for instance, city dances, polished city manners, city conversation, and city taste in dress; but with all pompous ceremonials, long trains, stiffness, and frigidity laid aside. There were dancing, and hearty laughter, promenading and flirting, under the eyes of the older people, who had arranged themselves in gossiping groups around the room. The cool night wind looked in at the open windows, and now and then took a stroll across the floor, and the clean white Hollands shades swayed gently as if beckoning it to return. They that felt it passing, paused in their conversation, and heard the low voices and slow steps of those that had left the frolic and light of the room for a quiet chat and promenade on the walks and the piazza.

"Is Doctor Wayne here?" Judith asked.

"No, I think not!" Huntingford answered, looking about him to make sure. Contrary to his expectation, however, he saw the Doctor among

the company. "After all, I am wrong, I see. If you will look this way, toward the door where we came in, you will see him talking with Mr. Bishop, the landlord."

"To be sure! I could not be mistaken in that kindly face. May has described him so minutely that I feel almost acquainted with him. Will you introduce me! See, the music has stopped, and I know you are anxious to claim May for the next dance."

"Certainly," he answered, and led her toward the door.

As they walked back across the now almost deserted floor, she spoke again: "We have not had much opportunity to get acquainted in this little time, and I do so wish to know well all May's friends; will you come for me again after you have had your dance?"

"Nothing could please me better," he answered gallantly.

When they reached the Doctor's side, the promised introduction took place; and Huntingford, having seen these new acquaintances safely launched on a congenial topic of conversation, thought that he might withdraw. As he excused himself and turned to go, Judith laid her fingers softly on his arm, detaining him while she said quietly, "Do not forget your promise. I shall have something to tell you that will be worth your attention."

He bowed and left them. Searching with his eyes all parts of the room, he soon saw May

among a group of young people, and went to claim her for the next dance.

"The next is mine?" he asked, when he reached her.

"Yes," she answered; and without more words, taking his arm, almost led him out of the group.

"Shall we dance?" he asked.

"Not unless you wish to," she answered, wearily.

"You are looking tired," he said, after a pause.

"And I am; oh, so weary!"

"Yet I see you have few dances unengaged," he said meaningly, after looking at her programme.

"You do not know my handwriting," she answered.

He lifted her card again, and asked, "You did not write in all these names yourself?"

"Almost all!" she answered.

"And may I have some of these dances?"

"Any of them you wish." She glanced up into his face, and her dark eyes expressed an entreaty that he understood.

"You wish to leave the crowd for awhile. Let us go." He took the little hand that rested so lightly on his arm and drew it to a more secure position. When he had placed it to his liking, his fingers seemed loth to leave it. His heart also was acting strangely, making jumps into his throat; all of which escaped the tired girl's attention.

Seeing this, he said no more; but led her out of the room to the veranda.

While Huntingford and Miss Larned were strolling up and down the piazza, Judith was talking with Doctor Wayne. She well knew that, as she was supposed to be Valmont's sister, both he and Mr. Huntingford would suspect her motives the moment they saw that she was attempting to lead the conversation; consequently she was forced to proceed very cautiously. But she was skilled in the art of language, and having at heart the good of the girl whom she saw so unprotected in what her own dearly bought experience told her was a den of wolves, she won her way patiently and perseveringly, through barrier after barrier, until she had gained an understanding of the situation.

Meanwhile, Huntingford and Miss Larned were promenading in the cool night air. Their words were few and softly spoken, but in the eloquent silences between, love spun about them, unhindered, his gentle snare.

Returning to the room after their second promenade, they found themselves in the midst of a group gathered about Mr. Buchanan, who had just arrived.

The lawyer had been saying something of more than ordinary moment; for they that had heard him were evidently interested, as their silence and the expression of their faces showed.

"Isn't it awful?" murmured one young lady, as Huntingford and May came up.

"But how do you explain it? What reason



could they have had?" asked Judith; for she was one of the group. Then drawing Mr. Gripeigh, who was her escort, a little to one side, so that Huntingford and his partner might join the circle, she turned to May and said: "Mr. Buchanan was just telling us something about the excitement at the debate in the park two or three weeks ago."

"It has not been an easy task to find out who threw the missile, to say nothing of discovering some motive for the act," Mr. Buchanan answered.

"Probably it was nothing more than a gentle reminder from excitable members on the other side of the question that they didn't like such doctrines as you upheld," said Gripeigh.

"Possibly that is so; but it was a way of objecting to a speaker's opinions that we of this country are unaccustomed to," answered the lawyer; and he sharply scrutinized Gripeigh's face.

"Then you have discovered who the guilty parties were?" Huntingford asked, seeing the look and the expression of hostility in it.

"Yes, I believe so. They are thought to be—that is, the leaders of the movement are—men connected with the mine up the river. The prime mover in the affair seems to have been a certain Croitier, who has charge of a gang of men; in fact, the ruffian afterward, when drunk, boasted to some choice congenial spirits that he 'started the row.'"

"He is the man that made himself so obnoxious

to you, is he not?" Judith asked quietly, looking up into Huntingford's face.

"Yes, I believe that was his name," he answered, wondering how Judith had come to know of the affair. Then, addressing Mr. Buchanan, "But all those men are supposed to be of the party whose candidate and cause you were advocating, are they not?"

"Yes, of course; and that is the peculiar part of it. But there is little doubt of the identity of those engaged in the disgraceful proceeding," he reasserted, as he caught a smile of incredulity flickering on Gripeigh's face.

The music of a waltz interrupted the conversation.

"Do I not have the honor?" Gripeigh asked, stepping to May's side.

"Is yours the next?" she asked, taking up her card. She found that he was right, and they joined the dancers.

The group broke up, and Huntingford was moving away, when a girlish voice close beside him said:

"Miss 'Business' is certainly charming!"

Huntingford turned sharply around, and confronted the teasing face of Miss Fanton, who had come up with Miss Smith and Mrs. Van Dank.

"Yes," she continued, as the young man was shaking hands, "I positively approve of her; though I can't say I like her *nom de guerre*. What is her real name, Mr. Huntingford? there's a good man."

Huntingford took the quizzing good naturedly.

"The elder lady is Mrs. Reitz; the younger, Miss Larned."

"Larned, Larned," mused Miss Fanton. "Ah! that's far better than 'Business'; I wonder you prefer the latter. Now, if you'll dance this waltz with Miss Smith, I'll promise not to tease you again during the evening."

"A double boon!" exclaimed the young man, laughingly. "Come, Miss Smith; I am sure you can't refuse me the pleasure of a waltz and an escape from Miss Fanton's cruelty." And they glided away into the midst of the swaying, weaving throng, to the strains of *Il Baccio*.

"I 'ad me 'opes," as Mr. Guppy feelingly remarked," said Miss Fanton, turning to Mrs. Van Dank, "but now——"

The portly woman gave a doubtfully sentimental little sigh, as she answered, "Ah, well, they're strange creatures—these men! no more to be depended upon than blue birds in March. But this girl—Miss Larned, wasn't it?—is a sweet looking creature, and I wish him joy."

"But he's such a splendid fellow; and I had quite made up my mind about him and Nellie. It's a shame! She might have had him, I believe, if she'd only been sensible enough to fall in love with him. Now, I suppose from the looks of things, it's too late."

"I fear so. Did you see him look at her? I wash my hands of the whole affair!" and Mrs. Van Dank led the way to a sofa.

One may deceive a man—all men—as to the state of his heart; but women divine such things by the intuition of sympathy, and one may as well unbosom himself to them at the outset; for his heart will open to them, like a hymn-book, at the marked page, whether he will it or not.

It was quite late in the evening, and there were indications that the hop would soon be over, when Huntingford sought the actress to redeem his promise.

“Let us go for a promenade,” she said; “I am a little tired of this hot room.”

They were soon strolling up and down the shadowy piazza. Their walk was almost solitary, for most of those that were not dancing had gone home.

“How much of what is going on beneath the surface can be learned in a quiet way, if one only tries to discover it,” Judith said, as if to herself.

“Yes, I suppose so, yet——”

“‘Yet;’ you would like to say that you don’t know that there is anything going on here to which my remark could be applied; but you are too honest.”

“You flatter me outrageously. Let me see; what can I think of to say that will be a fair return for such an opinion so well expressed?” he responded lightly, trying to change to a safer subject.

“Don’t let us wander from the point,” she continued quickly; and he realized by her earnest tone that all his lightness had been thrown away.

"There is much going on here, and you know it; only, suspecting me as the sister of Mr. Valmont, you will not admit it to me."

"Yes!" he retorted sarcastically, as if to say that she might have her way if it pleased her.

"Do not speak like that! You will make me angry, and then I can do you no good. Listen!" and stopping suddenly she brought him also to standstill. "Never mind the reasons why I speak to you; it is the truth that I am speaking," she said impressively. "I love that young girl better than anyone else in the world. You love her, too. Don't look so shocked because I speak out so boldly what you know, but don't dare to confess even to yourself. I should like you quite well, too, if you would treat me as if I were worthy of your confidence; which is not the treatment you give me now. But never mind that; you think you have good reasons for suspecting me, and so I forgive you. You have made a visit to the iron mine; you have had a quarrel with that same man who started the riot on the common. Oh, I learned all this just now from your friend, the Doctor. You are thinking of going to the mine again. I ask you not to go; I warn you against going!"

"I thought so!" Huntingford answered sarcastically.

"Don't answer me in that way!" she cried impatiently, and the fingers resting on his arm closed about it with no tender clasp.

They began walking again. "What shall I

say?" he returned, smiling. "If you keep on speaking in this strain I shall begin to think that there is something dangerous somewhere, which I haven't as yet suspected."

"You know that there are dangers in the air; dangers for one that we both love. You ought to see by this time that I know what is in your mind. I know more; I know of a danger that lies in wait for you."

"For instance?"

"For instance! Why will you be so stupid? You will not go to the mine again?"

"On the contrary, I shall—to-morrow morning."

"Come, let us go in; I am wasting time with you." And she drew him back into the room.

But, once inside, better impulses overcame her vexation, and she determined to make one more effort to hold him back from an expedition that her knowledge of Valmont's character told her would be full of peril. Bending toward him, she whispered, "You have made me very angry, but I will try to forgive you. I ought to tell you more of my reasons for wishing to help you before I claim your obedience to my warning. Come to me to-morrow before you start for the mine and you shall be satisfied. You promise to me that you will come?"

"Yes, I will come," he answered briefly.

Could it be possible that he wronged the woman? No, of course not; yet it would do no harm to meet her in the morning; and so,

in a kindlier spirit, they said good-night, and parted.

"Come with me for a moment, please," Judith said to May, when, after returning from the hop, they were climbing the stairs. "I would like to tell you something before you go to bed;" and she led the way to her room. May followed obediently, too tired, and too thoughtful of other things, to wonder at the request.

"There," said Judith, when, having laid her own and her companion's wraps aside, she took a seat upon an arm of the easy chair into which May had thrown herself. "Do you know, I am so used to late hours that I have come to look upon this time of the night as the brightest part of my day. But you are not listening. Come, dear, rouse yourself! What I wish you to hear concerns you very deeply."

"Yes? I will try, then. Now do you think me more attentive?" she asked, looking up with some return of her customary brightness.

"So; that is better! Do you know, May, I have been trying all the evening to discover what there is going on here beneath the surface?—in your life and Mr. Huntingford's, I mean."

A warm color overspread the young girl's face, but she said nothing; and Judith continued: "You believe me when I say that I love you dearly—almost as a mother loves her child?—and I am old enough to be your mother."

"Are you, truly? I should not think so," said

the girl softly, wondering whither the conversation was tending.

“I am, dear, nevertheless;” and Judith took one of the little hands lying idly in the girl’s lap, and laying it over her own knee, caressed it tenderly. “But you believe in me and trust me, don’t you?”

“Yes,” May answered, and she rested her tired head against the breast of the woman bending over her.

“Thank you, dearest. You do not, can not, know how much comfort your words give me! If Mr. Huntingford had trusted me, I should not have to distress you. Yet I like him very much, for all that.”

“Then you don’t think that he is mercenary, and trying to——” the girl stopped short.

“To win you for your wealth?” Judith asked, completing the sentence. “Who put such an idea into this little head? Was it your step-father?”

“Yes.”

“I thought as much! No; far from that. I think him one of the best men I have ever met, and I like him thoroughly. Yet he will not trust me, and therefore I must tell you something that will cause you much pain.”

May’s interest was now thoroughly awakened, and her eyes were bright with apprehension as she waited for Judith’s disclosures.

The latter plunged at once into the midst of the matter: “Mr. Huntingford is in serious danger.



I have tried to warn him, but he will not heed me. He has good reasons for distrusting me—reasons that I can not explain away. You must do what I have failed to do—keep him out of harm's reach."

"But how? When will the harm come, and why? How can I prevent it?"

"Listen! There is a mine somewhere about here?"

"Yes; the iron mine——"

"He has been there; has found out something that others wish concealed; or, if he has not discovered anything as yet, they do not wish him to go where he might make discoveries. You and I both know who these others are."

"Yes! yes!" May cried impatiently, straining every nerve to hold herself perfectly quiet, that she might not lose a word.

"They have everything at stake; they must keep him away."

"Surely they would not resort to violence."

"Would they not?" Judith cried. "You do not know the character of one of them as I have learned it, to my cost." The harshness of Judith's tone and the flashing anger in her eyes did not escape May, even in her own trouble. "And they have a ready tool in this Croitier, whose anger Mr. Huntingford has aroused."

"No! no!" the girl cried, struggling to her feet; "they must not, shall not! Mr. Valmont may have it all; but no harm shall come to *him*." She would have rushed from the room to find her step-father if Judith had not detained her.

"No, May; you can do nothing in that way. You will only show him what you have shown to me—that you know enough about his plans to endanger them. He will see that he has to fight you, also, as well as the others."

These were strange words for a sister to use; and as their inconsistency dawned upon May, some faint suspicion registered itself in her face.

Judith caught the expression and divined its meaning. "Do not you, too, doubt me; you think me that man's sister, but I am not. Don't look so startled! I am worthy to be yours. But that is not the question. I wish you, now, to promise me that you will keep your own counsel—will not let anyone know that I suspect anything; and we will lay our heads together to devise some plan to upset their schemes. You promise?"

"Yes," said May, compelled to the affirmative by Judith's impetuous will.

"You will not repeat this conversation even to Mr. Huntingford?"

"No! But what can we do?"

Judith pressed the unresisting girl back into the chair, and lowering her voice, said: "Mr. Huntingford is determined to go to the mine to-morrow morning, but he has promised to see me before he starts. You must meet him in my place, and keep him from going."

"But how?"

"Can you not find some excuse when his life may be at stake?"

"Let me think! You are sure he will come here before going?"

"He promised me he would; is not that enough?"

"True; I had forgotten that. I must go to my room. I must think."

As they arose, Judith clasped her arms about May's waist and led the girl gently away. "Remember," she said, "I am your devoted friend."

"I believe you and trust you," May returned; and the two women kissed each other good-night.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### "INTO AN ENCHANTED LAND."

That Huntingford would go to the mine if nothing were done to prevent him, Miss Larned knew. She knew that since his first visit he had staid away until such time as he should be able to go openly and with authority, as representative of some of the stockholders, to ask questions and to look into the management of the mine. The Wells-Larned Company had made him its proxy. The hour for openly calling the management of the property to account had arrived; and Huntingford was a man who would lose no time. No trifling subterfuge nor vague warning could deter him. Nothing but a plain statement of her fears for his safety would be effective. But was she

prepared to tell him that his safety was of more moment to her than her threatened fortune—than the exposure of the plot to rob her? Had it not been insinuated that he also was a crafty schemer, with his own selfish purposes to further by aiding her?

If he was the honest, cool-headed man she thought him to be, her fears and entreaties would not restrain him from doing what he considered his duty, unless she had facts to urge in justification of them. Mrs. Reitz's intervention must then be acknowledged; but having once disregarded her warning, suspecting a latent design, could he be expected to heed it when urged a second time?

And if Huntingford would not heed her warning, and refused to give up his visit to the mine at her simple request, what then was to be done? She worried over the situation, but could reach no conclusion.

So time sped. Valmont and the other arch-plotter drove away together. Judith went to her room; and the time when Huntingford might be expected drew near.

Soon Miss Larned saw him coming up the walk. They met on the veranda.

"You are not ill?" he asked; for his eyes were quick to see the traces of sleeplessness in her pallor and her darkened eyes. "These late entertainments will not do, I fear;" he added, with a questioning smile.

"It is not that," she answered; "I am not ill—

only——” The hand that she had extended to him as he came up the steps, was still in his. She had not cared or thought to withdraw it; but the other, at her side, had clenched itself among the folds of her dress, in sympathy with her struggle to maintain her calmness and resolution, which she felt yielding to a stronger feeling.

“Only what?” he asked.

“Never mind; it has escaped me. Won’t you step in?”

When they had come into the dim, cool parlor, she turned to him with the question, “You are going to the mine this morning?”

“Yes. I am thinking of it.”

“You have come to see Judith?”

“Yes,” he answered briefly; for he began to catch the drift of her questioning.

“She wished me to see you, and try to dissuade you from going,” the girl continued.

“She told you how dangerous, perilous, and so forth, a simple pleasure ride might be, of course?” he said, banteringly.

“Yes, she told me; and please do not treat it lightly.”

“I do not think lightly of it, at all events,” he returned.

“It is serious, very serious, indeed!” she continued, hoping that, after all, the struggle might be easier than she had expected.

Huntingford, however, was not thinking of Mrs. Reitz’s warning, but of this, her last attempt, which he regarded as a shameful scheme to thwart

him by making May an instrument to wreck her own fortune.

"I don't mean her warning, of course," he said. "I don't regard that at all. But she has distressed you, I can see, and——"

"But what she says is true," Miss Larned interrupted.

"How can it be? Think a moment! She is your guardian's sister. Would she be——"

Again the girl interrupted him, seeing the drift of his thoughts. "Yes, I know; she told me the reason why you would not listen to her warning. But even supposing you were right, doesn't the very fact that she has warned you, show that there is at least something to fear? Would she have spoken at all if she were not friendly to us?"

Miss Larned was standing close by the door, steadying herself with one hand on the back of a chair. Her form swayed slightly, either from nervousness or from the effort to stand still. Huntingford was pacing the room with measured strides, while pleasure at the thought that the girl was not indifferent to his danger, and vexation that another obstacle was thus thrown in his way, were battling in his mind.

"I believe they know that we suspect them," he said at last, thoughtfully, lowering his voice; "and this effort of theirs to keep me away to-day shows me plainly that there is something now going on up there that they want concealed, but that we ought to know. It is my duty to find out what it is, and I must find it out."

Still he had not convinced her. In fact, her distress was increased; for she knew that Judith's warning was given in good faith. She summoned resolution to use her last resource. "And all this scheming, this worry and fret, and possible crime, are for a few dollars and cents! I am tired of it. Let them have my money. I give up the struggle, and forbid you to go."

Startled by her impetuous recklessness and the sudden change from entreaty to command, he turned and looked sharply into her face; but when he saw that her eyes were full of tears, and that her hands were extended toward him entreatingly, his manner changed, grew kind and tender, as coming close, he said: "You are distressed, disturbed by the wiles of an artful woman. Your words else would convey a meaning that would make me the happiest of men. But I do not delude myself. I take your solicitude for my welfare as you intend it—as for a friend—and thank you very, very much.

He should have seen that only love could have prompted her words—that love for which he would have begged upon his knees; but it was all so sudden that he dared not trust in his apparent good fortune. He attributed her anxiety to friendship, and made the worst possible reply; for it seemed to say that he had not only understood her words, but knew that love had prompted them, and declined it.

He felt that he had lost footing when she drew her hands quickly from his, and the expression *of her face* changed.

Yet she was mindful of her purpose, despite her bitterness of spirit; and asked, "Then you will not go to the mine?"

"I must," he answered slowly, standing before her with bowed head. "Suppose, for a moment, that this dramatic warning is all in good faith; suppose they have all the will in the world to harm me; yet this is a civilized country, and I shall go in the daytime; how will they manage it?"

"They will find a way, never fear," she said. And now another inexplicable change came into her manner. No longer pleading, reasoning, or angry, her face was coldly calm and resolute. "What time do you start?" she asked, in a voice so steady and business-like that he looked at her for some time before he came to himself sufficiently to answer.

"In half an hour or so, I suppose," he said, taking out his watch.

"Very well;" and before he could ask her meaning she had slipped away, leaving him to conjure up his own solution of the riddle, as he walked back to the Doctor's house.

But it was all explained when, half an hour later, he rode past the house, and saw her on the back of her sorrel cantering down to meet him at the edge of the hill.

"I am going with you," she said, answering the question in his face, as he rode to her side.

"You do not believe there is any danger, then?" he asked.

"No; I have gotten over that," she said; but



in her face, despite the smile that accompanied her words, there was the same pallor, in her eyes the same expression of resolution that he saw there when she left him a little while before.

"That is right; it will do you good to breathe the pure air of the woods. I wanted to ask you last night; but thought you wouldn't wish to leave Mrs. Reitz. Besides, you know you said that you did not like to visit the mine."

"Neither do I, generally; but to-day it is different, you see;" and giving rein to her horse, she dashed down the hill. Then Lucifer lengthened his strides until he had caught up, and away the two riders went side by side, over the rumbling bridge, past factories and mills, far out of sight and sound of Adairsville, before either spoke again.

Yet the ride was not as agreeable as it might have been. The silence that brooded over them invited gloomy thoughts. He saw that his companion was watching with strained eyes every bush and shadowy fence-corner along the road, as if she were looking for something that she expected but dreaded to see. It was evident that she had not given up her fears; and seeing how deeply seated they were in her mind, he began to grow uneasy himself, out of sheer sympathy. He endeavored, rather feebly, to silence them. "There is no possible danger," he said.

"I am not afraid," she responded; "else why should I be here? If I was timid, you have reasoned me out of it—but the mine is a disagree-

able place; let us hasten and get your visit over."

She made no effort to conceal the fact that she did not mean what she said; and Huntingford grew more and more uneasy as they galloped along.

The danger, however, if it existed at all, would meet him at the mine, he thought; and he resolved to persuade his companion to await his return at the Indian Glen.

But the glen would have a tenant before them; for Croitier, gun in hand, was toiling down the mountain side in that direction.

Since his enforced vacation from service at the mine began, he had literally taken to the woods—to the old life in which he had grown up; for his father was a Canadian trapper, and had brought him up in the forest. He spent his nights and the early and late hours of the day away from the mine, carousing with friends or wandering alone, no man knew where. But in the forenoon of each day he was to be found hanging around the mine, waiting with dogged patience for the time to come when he could perform that service, whatever it might be, which, though unmentioned, he knew was expected of him and for which he still drew pay. Besides, his private vengeance had not been accomplished, and Huntingford might appear at any time. This morning Croitier was later than usual.

On he came, scrambling down the mountain side; at times letting himself carefully over the

mossy sides of bowlders; at others, plunging his heavy body with crashing recklessness through the dense bushes; on, on, to the level surface of the rock that overlooked the river and the glen.

Growling at the heat of the woods he had just left, he stood his long rifle against a tree, and threw himself down in the shade beside it. Though already far from sober, his first action after finding a comfortable position, was to take a long, deep draught from the flask that he carried in his pocket. Then turning on his back, he muttered in his backwoods jargon: "Bah, it is a hot day! The mine, far under the ground, it is not so warm. Yet it is better to hunt with the rifle; the fields and the trees, they are free. It is liberty! I am free as the bird. I do nothing; yet the master, he still pays me my price. Behold, it is strange!"

Croitier grinned as he said this, and his face bore a repulsive expression. "But the smile is not for you," he continued, "until you have wiped out this disgrace. Hein! the fine rascal who has made it to me; I will one day pay to him my respects; it is equal!"

When alone, Croitier's language was usually a jargon of Canadian French and Chinook, which, in conversation with Americans, he studiously avoided. He continued, irrelevantly:

"Ah, the beastly weather! It is so hot that one takes not pleasure even to hunt; it is very nearly too hot to run the danger of these game-laws, which are crazy. Bah, I snap my finger at

the game-laws." And he endeavored to suit the action to the word; but, owing to his condition, the snap missed fire. Then he apostrophized his rifle:

"Then it is thou, my beauty! But thou dost not grow weary with the hunt like me. Thou dost not become weak in the leg and heavy in the head at this accursed weather like me. My father, he has borne thee many a time. Ah, there is much blood upon thy head, my wife." And his face expanded into an evil grin at this witicism.

"I wonder if he would feel shame to see his son carry thee. But thou knowest, eh? that I shoot not ill; is it not so, my jewel?" patting the gun tenderly, and drawing it to him.

"Now," continued Croitier, rising to a sitting posture and laying the rifle across his knees, "now if my fortune, if fate, if any chance whatever bring this rascal whom I hate, fervidly, before thy lovely mouth, my fair songstress, wouldst thou sing me true the song I teach thee? My faith, I think thou wouldst. But, sacrément! it is too hot at present to think even upon the most sweet vengeance."

At this moment a sound fell upon his ear which startled him into silent attention. It was the sound of hoof-beats coming up the ravine below. After listening for a moment, he muttered:

"It is those game-laws which I despise. Let us see." And throwing himself prone upon his face, he crept to the edge of the rock, drawing his rifle after him.

Had Croitier been sober, he would have known that no officer would have come after him thus openly on horseback. But possessed by his maudlin conclusion, he cautiously parted the bushes and gazed down the road.

The hoof-beats sounded nearer and nearer, and in a few minutes Huntingford and Miss Larned came into view above the river bank.

At the sight of his hated enemy the lawless blood of the barbarian boiled within him, and, without reflecting upon the consequences, he muttered between his teeth, "It is fate! Behold the rascal!" and carefully sighted his rifle at the unsuspecting rider beneath him.

Huntingford and his companion, forced to pick their way among the stones of the river bed, had been coming on more slowly, yet all too surely. In a moment they reached the place where the path left the water's edge and led up the bank toward the rock where Croitier lay in ambush. Up this steep incline the horses scrambled, bringing their riders side by side at the top, and then —

Huntingford heard a sharp cry from his companion; saw her give a convulsive pull at the reins, throwing her horse's head into the air and across his path.

He clasped her around the waist to save her from a fall.

At that instant a sharp report rang out above them. He vaguely heard a heavy thud near by, and before he could grasp the significance of the

event, May's horse fell dead from beneath her, leaving her in his arms.

It was then, while trying to maintain his seat on the now frantic Lucifer, with the girl's weight dragging him down on one side, that a sense of what had happened flashed upon him.

He saw the horse stretched out upon the turf. A whiff of smoke was drifting down toward him from the direction of the rock.

The shot had been intended for him. She had seen the gun-barrel; had divined its purpose; had tried to shield him with her body; had succeeded in giving her horse the shot; and so had saved his life.

Now, having regained his seat and drawn her up into the saddle before him, he wrenched Lucifer around, and plunged headlong down the path. Furiously over the rattling stones, with all the force of voice and spur, he urged the panting horse, now almost overburdened with the added weight; stumbling, scrambling, onward they plunged, making a mighty clatter in that lonely place. Her arms clasped him tightly, and her voice urged him to "fly—fly!" Then her hold relaxed, her voice faltered, and her head began to slip away from his shoulder.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "Did it hit you?" and his own face became as pale as hers.

"No, no," came the whispered answer. "Only faint."

Dropping the reins upon the horse's neck, he lifted her drooping head with his disengaged

hand, pressed her to his breast, calling her by every endearing name, and trying to rouse her. Responsive to his voice and kisses, the dark eyes opened, and with a little smile she gazed dreamily into his face. Then darkness settled down more heavily upon her senses; and whispering, "Get me some water," her voice trailed off into silence, and she hung limp and senseless in his arms.

Lucifer, now left to his own guidance, was moving at a slower pace, picking his way carefully among the stones. At the word of command he stood still; and Huntingford cautiously descended to the rocky ground. He looked about for some place soft with moss or turf, where he might lay her, but he saw nothing but the river purling over the stones behind him, the dry margin at his feet, jagged with rocks and stones, and the gravelly bank rising before him like a wall, with the frayed ends of roots sticking out, dead and colorless, between him and the sky. There was no help for it; and he laid her in the smoothest place he could find, putting his coat under her head to save her face from the stones, and bathed her face and hands with water. Then he saw that Lucifer was straying off. To catch and tie the horse to an overhanging root was the work of a moment; and he was again left with the motionless form and the face so deathly pale.

He knew, in a general way, that fainting fits are not dangerous; but might there not be cases, he thought, where they prove more serious? Was she dead? No; laying his ear to her chest, he



"It is late! Behold the rascal! Page 262.





caught the sound of her heart faintly beating. He fell to bathing her face again, with nervous, tender touch, trying to think of some ready means that he must have heard of, at some time, to assist him in reviving her. Meanwhile, the silence about them grew terrible and overpowering; the clank of Lucifer's hoofs, pawing the stones, was a most welcome sound. Yet he dared not speak aloud; he could only whisper her name over and over again, calling her his darling—his savior. Still she showed no sign of returning consciousness, and he himself felt a dizziness, born of anxiety and suspense, stealing over him.

Then, at last, when hope had almost left him, he caught the sound of a faint sigh, and saw that she was coming back to life. Slowly the dark eyes opened and gazed into his face, at first vacantly, then wonderingly; and then with a cry of surprise she tried to sit up.

"What has happened?" she asked, helplessly.

"You have been faint; that is all," he said, trying to compose his voice, in which anxiety and delight were blended.

"I fainted?" she asked, puzzled.

"Yes; but you are all right now—thank God for that!"

"But—why—and where's Nellie?" seeing that her horse was not standing beside Lucifer. Then the scene came back to her; the rifle aimed at them from the top of the rock, the flash, the report, the struggling horse, and the headlong plunge down the steep bank to the river-bed.

"And you—are you hurt?" she asked, with a shudder.

He saw that she remembered it all. "No, not in the least. But you must not think about it—at least not now; not until you have fully recovered. Come, rest a little longer."

"No, it is better for me to be moving. Help me up, please." She struggled to her feet, but would have fallen again had he not caught her.

"You see," he said, "you are not strong enough;" and he tried to persuade her to sit still.

"That will pass away—oh, that dreadful face; and the flash. It was awful!" She hid her face in her hands.

Supporting her in his arms, he felt by her trembling how great had been the shock. "But that is over. He can not harm us now. Try to think of something else, May. I may call you that, may I not?" he asked, to change the subject of her thoughts.

She made no motion—spoke no word to indicate that she had heard the question. Her mind still dwelt upon the dreadful scene that had just been enacted. "And he may be following us," she cried suddenly, lifting a terrified face from his breast. "Come, come; we must go!" and she forced him to half lead half carry her forward to the place where the black horse was tied. And when he had unhitched Lucifer, he put his arms through the reins, and they went on again.

As she had predicted, she seemed to gather strength with motion; and Huntingford seeing it,

was grateful. But at this first lifting of immediate care and anxiety, his mind flashed back to the awful danger that but a moment before hung over her, and he could not repress an exclamation of horror at the thought.

"What is it?" she asked, looking up quickly.

"Nothing," he said, attempting to smile.

"Do not tell me that! It must have been something. Tell me! You are not hurt?"

"No," he said; "I am as safe and sound as it is possible to be; and I take this to be proof that there is a wise, kind Providence, who guides the footsteps of the fool!" he added bitterly. The danger had missed her, it was true; still, it had hit very near; and the cause of it all was his stupidity and stubbornness in resisting her entreaty not to visit the mine.

"You must not call yourself names. Remember I was the first cause of your coming here at all," she said, assuming the rôle of comforter.

"And a nice price you might have paid for it!" he continued, still bitter against himself. "I am not worth it—no man is worth running such risks for."

"I will not walk with you if you talk like that," and she made an effort to put away the arm that clasped her waist. "Besides, I think I am quite strong enough now to walk alone." Some of her natural brightness and spirits were coming back.

Huntingford stopped, and brought her to a standstill; and the black horse, which had fol-

lowed them so quietly, stopped also, and turned his attention to a search for any grass that might be growing near.

After they had stood for some time in silence, Huntingford, with the girl's last words in his mind, said: "You are much stronger in many ways, and much wiser than I. Let me pass over many things you may have noticed in me that, perhaps, I ought to explain; for I have no time; I must hurry to something more important."

The girl's heart had almost ceased beating. Her nervousness increased; but not from dread.

"There was a time," Huntingford continued, pressing her a little closer to him, and trying to get a glimpse of her downcast face—"There was a time when I thought it would be possible for me to serve you; to do the work I came to do, calmly, without personal interest. The first time I saw you, that night on Doctor Wayne's veranda—you remember it, do you not? I saw then something of the danger I was running. I almost made up my mind to go back to the city and leave my task to someone else. But I determined that I would not do that; because if I did come to love you, you should never know it. I would go away when the time came, and get over it as best I could; and you would think kindly of me sometimes, as one that had done you a real service. You see what foolish arguments a man uses to convince himself that he ought to do what he wants to do."

He had not told her in plain words that he

loved her. He had not asked for her love in return; and he spoke bitterly still.

"Why are you so bitter against yourself?" she asked, looking into his face.

"Why am I bitter?" he cried. "Because I did not act on my first impulse, and leave this place before your sweet face and gentle self had woven about me this mesh, which I can not break through; for I love you, May; I love you—better than life?" His words were quick and sharp—wrenched, as it were, from his very heart.

"Why need you break through it?" she asked, shyly, as if she had not heard his confession.

His heart came into his throat. "Do you love me, then?" he asked, breathlessly.

She nodded "yes;" for her face was hidden against his breast.

"But think, May, you ought not to! I am no match for you; and it is almost dishonest in me to ask you for your love."

"But I do!"—very softly.

"But you are rich and I am poor."

"Hush! Do not speak of that; for I see clearly now that my money has been the cause of all the misery I have ever known." She lifted her hand to impose silence. He caught it and pressed it to his lips.

Their eyes met. All lightness and shyness had vanished, and all bitterness had passed away.

"We are making a compact for life;" he said, very seriously.

"For ever and ever—after life ends," she answered gently.

"Yes; for ever and ever," he said.

The climbing sun peeped down upon them through the tree-tops on the bank above. The hurrying river seemed all smiles and dimples in the sunlight dancing on its surface. Even Lucifer, who had long ago given up his search for green things on the rocky ground, and now stood resignedly battling with the flies, seemed loath to disturb their dreaming; and when he could no longer restrain his impatience, it was by the lightest sniffing at their hair and ears, and the gentlest rubbing of his velvet muzzle against their shoulders, that he suggested that they had stood with arms about each other and faces close together long enough.

Heeding at last these gentle hints, Huntingford lifted his companion to the saddle. She gathered up the reins, so that he would not have to lead the horse, and might walk beside her.

Thus, by easy stages, they journeyed home.

Who shall describe that journey! Not they, certainly; although the memory of it will linger with them all their days. Nor will we.

They were like wanderers in a fairy tale, who, wandering helpless through the night of some hideous cavern, come suddenly out into an enchanted land.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## ARMED NEUTRALITY.

It was some time after one o'clock when the two young people reached the village. They went directly to Doctor Wayne's house; for to him before all others they would confide the story of their engagement. The family were just sitting down to luncheon, when Huntingford looked into the dining-room, and beckoned to Doctor Wayne, who followed him out to the veranda, where May was waiting. In a few words the young man recounted the events of the morning.

The Doctor was horrified at the peril they had passed, but the finale pleased him greatly. Tacitly consenting for the time to ignore with them the tragedy, he congratulated and blessed them again and again. For long ere the two lovers reached Adairsville, they had put behind them all considerations but their happiness; they were too fully occupied with the present to remember anything belonging to the dark ages of two hours ago.

In the midst of the talk, Mrs. Fink, who had meanwhile prepared places at the table for the new comers, came out and asked them in to luncheon.



Afterward, they talked over matters with the Doctor, who, nevertheless, found various pretexts for leaving them alone during several brief but delicious intervals. In fact, the old gentleman was delighted with the results of the morning, and possibly plumed himself on having prepared the way for the engagement; anyway, he received, with an amused smile, May's assurance that it was owing to the accident, and said, "Mr. Huntingford must have foreseen the accident long in advance, then;" whereupon the young man blushed, finding that his secret had been so easy to penetrate.

While they were in the midst of their conversation, Judith came in. From the window of her room, where she was dressing, she had seen them pass; and while it was evident that neither was injured, the absence of May's horse troubled her. She thought, however, that Miss Larned would return immediately, and as soon as her toilet was completed, she hurried downstairs to await May on the veranda. Finally, when she could no longer control her anxiety, she donned her hat and followed the young people to the Doctor's house.

Here the story was told to her. The engagement pleased her no less than it pleased the old Doctor, and she expressed her satisfaction characteristically. But she was interested in the discovery of the motives that led to the attempt on Huntingford's life, and resolved that they should be investigated; so, as soon as the opportunity came, she said:

“Meanwhile, what have you done toward catching the fellow?”

“Nothing, as yet,” Huntingford was forced to confess; “but I think, from May’s description, that I know the man. He has a grievance against me; but I never imagined he would attempt to kill me.”

“Is he in Mr. Valmont’s service?”

Huntingford scrutinized Judith sharply. Although her warning had been proved sincere, he could not comprehend her motives. “No,” said he, “the man was discharged because of the trouble he had with me. It is purely a personal matter, I think.” Could it be possible, he wondered, that by some chance this woman had heard of Croitier’s intentions against him? “I do not comprehend you, Mrs. Reitz,” he said at last. “I certainly owe my life to your intervention; but the motive—the circumstances——”

“But!” exclaimed the actress interrupting him, “but you are suspicious; and are displeased because you can not guess all the whys and wherefores.”

“Forgive me!” the young man cried quickly.

Judith interrupted him again. “No; you are right. I can not expect you to trust me, at present. Yet, on the other hand, I can not explain to you now. But if Doctor Wayne will listen to me for a few minutes, I can satisfy him of my sincerity; if he advises you to trust me, I suppose you will?”

May seized her friend’s hand, and kissed it im-

pulsively; then, with an appealing look to her lover, "But we do trust you; don't we, Ernest?"

The woman's offer to confide in Doctor Wayne was sufficient to convince the young man of her sincerity; therefore he answered without hesitation, "Yes, Mrs. Reitz; whatever your reasons may be, I require no further proof. Whatever secret you may have belongs to you; and I am only grateful for the friendship you have so fully proved."

But Judith had made up her mind to confide in the old Doctor; and, were it only to gain his friendship and sympathy, she would tell him all. Beyond this, however, she saw that her help would now be needed more than ever. The Doctor was the adviser and confidant of these two people, in whose fate she had become deeply interested, and if she were to be useful to them, the old gentleman must trust her. So she answered:

"Thank you for that. But the Doctor, who has good advice for everyone, can surely advise me. Doctor, will you hear my confession, and help me to conspire for the happiness of these two foolish children?"

"With pleasure," said the old man, courteously; "I am at your service." Indeed, he had some misgivings about the actual position of the lady, which he would be glad to have her remove.

"Run along, young people," said Judith gaily, rising. "You, Mr. Huntingford, I would advise to take measures at once for tracking your assail-

ant, and May can await you here, or you can take her home."

So they went off together, and the Doctor listened to Judith's history.

During all the years that had passed since Valmont abandoned her, Judith had never confided to anyone the story of her wrong; and now she told it simply, without any attempt at effect, and with many apologies for telling it at all. She explained, in a characteristic way, her motive in coming to Adairsville. "I heard of him as a successful and highly respected business man," she said; "and needing distraction after my hard work of the winter, it occurred to me that it would be fun to drop down upon him from the clouds. I knew that his second wife was dead, and that my visit could harm no one; and besides—I was curious. Maybe, also, I suspected his respectability, and wanted to assure myself that he was plotting against no other woman's fortune. Anyway, I intended no harm to him, and if harm comes to him from my presence, it is of his own making. Then I met May, and from the moment I saw that sweet child, I loved her. I am a Jewess, Doctor, and the feelings of our race are strong; and when I say I love the dear girl, it means everything."

It was true. Judith's heart went out to May with all the tenderness and passion of a mother's. Hitherto, she had loved only her art; henceforth, she would love May and her art, and woe to anyone that would attempt wrong to either.

Judith's revelation gave the Doctor a new insight into Valmont's character and motives. His instinctive distrust of the man was now justified; and he was glad to find in the actress an ally so able and so earnest. He pitied the woman, too, and admired the courage and fortitude that had enabled her to win her way, friendless and unaided, to reputation and fortune. He expressed his sympathy freely, and the sincere friendship founded that afternoon between these two generous souls, will end only with their lives.

Finally, Judith, declining the old gentleman's courteous offer to see her home, left him, and took her way up the street. In front of the post office, she came up with Huntingford, who, after having seen the sheriff and dispatched a request for a detective, was on his way to join May at Mr. Valmont's house, where they had decided to await her stepfather's return, and inform him of the engagement without delay.

Meanwhile, rumors concerning the adventure of the morning had spread about the village, and in lieu of actual knowledge, the gossips had invented details.

One of these distorted accounts reached Mr. Valmont, and the manner of its telling was likely to leave a lasting impression on that gentleman's mind.

He and Mr. Gripleigh left the mine earlier than usual that afternoon; for, though neither cared to speak of the subject that was uppermost in their thoughts, both were made somewhat uneasy by

the non-appearance of Huntingford or of Croitier. Until this day, the latter had presented himself regularly every morning, and had remained about the premises until late in the afternoon. It was expected that he would meet Huntingford here; that he would probably pick a quarrel with the young man; and that, if necessary, a well-timed interference would save the latter's life. Moreover, Mr. Valmont thought he knew his ex-foreman well enough to trust the fellow. He wished Huntingford only sufficient harm to check the inquiry into the management of the mine, and if any of the machinery so handy to the melodramatist—the mad-house, false arrest and imprisonment, or kidnapping—had been practicable, he would have been glad to adopt it, as an alternative. But one must work with the tools at hand, and Croitier, whom he believed to be cowardly as well as revengeful, had seemed admirably fitted for the purpose. His thirst for vengeance would insure serious injury, while his regard for his own precious neck would stop him short of murder. So Valmont had reasoned in advance, but the non-appearance of Croitier introduced into the result an element of uncertainty, upon which neither he nor Gripeigh had calculated.

The homeward ride was taken at an unusual speed and in unusual silence. They were both possessed with feverish anxiety and dread to know the worst as soon as possible, and have it over.

*About a mile from the village they met a*

farmer returning from an errand of purchase to several resorts of trade, including one or two bar-rooms.

The man was bursting with the news he had heard, and his intercourse with the inebriating cup during the afternoon, had been sufficiently long to annul any delicacy of feeling that may have belonged to him in his normal condition. So, as soon as he recognized Valmont's team, he drew up beside the road, and, swelling with his importance, waited. The two gentlemen in the buggy divined the subject of the coming news, and nerved themselves to hear it, as the neat carriage halted beside the shabby farm-wagon.

"How'do, Mr. Valmont?" the countryman exclaimed, leaning over the side of his vehicle. "I guess ye ain't been to hum."

"No," Valmont answered, bending forward, with a feeling of oppression about the heart. — "Whoa, there!" The impatience of his horses strangely angered him. — "Anything the matter?"

Gripleigh only gasped, and clutched the iron seat-guard convulsively.

"Ferfle, sir, ferfle! I kind o' hate to tell ye; but ye got to hear it sooner or later, enyhow. I jest come from town, an' everybody's talkin' about it down thar; they will hev that Miss Larned——"

"My God!" groaned Gripleigh in a whisper. Valmont merely breathed harder, and set his teeth.

"She was out ridin' this arternoon with that young feller from New York—what's 'is name?—and someun shot 'er. He fotched 'er home on his hoss. I'm 'tarnal sorry fer ye," he was continuing; but his audience was gone. He turned around in his seat to look after the speeding carriage veiled in a cloud of dust; and then, shaking his head gravely, clucked to his horse, and rumbled along homeward.

Not a word passed between the two men during their rapid drive into the village. They looked neither to the right nor to the left; yet, as they drove through the street, they were conscious of the pedestrians turning to stare after them, and of the hush that fell upon the noisy groups gathered on the hotel porch and in front of the post office.

Mr. Valmont scarcely checked the speed of the horses until they drew up beside his veranda; then, silently handing the reins to the stableman, he entered the house followed by Grippleigh.

Mrs. Reitz met them in the hall, and her grave looks confirmed the farmer's tidings.

"Is it true?" he demanded hoarsely. "Is she dead?"

Judith, at that moment, felt exceedingly bitter toward her former husband. She had never so thoroughly hated him; for despite Huntingford's assurance that Croitier's attempt was inspired only by personal resentment, she felt instinctively that the men before her were in some way responsible for it.



So she looked at them with stern indignation, and a lofty contempt made itself heard in her voice, as she answered, "Dead? No; not even scratched, thank God! Both of them escaped."

Her eyes searched his features; and when she noted the sudden relief that brightened them, she forgot prudence and ejaculated, "But don't imagine that the villain will escape; every soul that shares the guilt of this attempt shall pay for it!"

Valmont took no notice of the insinuation and threat. The reaction stunned him. His sole feeling at the moment was of relief at May's safety. "Where is she?" he asked after a moment.

"In there." Judith pointed toward the parlor door.

Then, as Valmont turned to enter, she added, "She is with her betrothed. Leave them together."

The thrust struck home. "What?" he cried; "with her——"

"Yes," Judith repeated, in calm enjoyment of his consternation; "with her betrothed."

Gripleigh's face was livid. He opened his mouth as if about to speak, but shut his lips tightly again, without having uttered a sound. Nothing escaped Judith's scrutiny. At that moment she felt herself a Nemesis. Had she dared, she would have charged the pair of them with having premeditated murder; with fraud; *with all that she suspected of their designs.* But

prudence checked her tongue, and she contented herself with giving the knife another turn in the wound.

"In one way the affair has been fortunate. There is no telling how long they might have been in learning how necessary they are to each other. I have been doing my best for them; but it is possible that, for all my help, they might have parted without discovering that they were created for each other. But when lives are at stake, people learn the truth quickly." She knew that every word she uttered was torture for the two plotters, and she would not spare them. "He will speak to you this afternoon," she said to Valmont. "The match is in every way desirable; don't you think so?"

Huntingford's appearance relieved Mr. Valmont from the necessity of answering. He darted a keen, inscrutable glance at the young man, who came forward confidently. Gripeigh gnawed his mustache and scowled. The three men bowed in a constrained manner, and Huntingford asked:

"May I speak with you a moment in private, Mr. Valmont?"

"With pleasure," Valmont answered, coldly and uncordially. "You will excuse me for a few minutes, Frederick? Thank you. Will you come up into the library, Mr. Huntingford?" And he led the way upstairs.

Judith also excused herself, and went to May in the parlor; while Gripeigh, left alone, stepped out upon the veranda, where he occupied himself

in stamping angrily up and down its length, cursing fate, cursing Huntingford, and calling himself hard names.

Mr. Valmont closed the library door, and politely handing his visitor a chair, seated himself where the light would not shine upon his face. His manner and expression showed only polite expectancy.

Huntingford spoke to the point at once:

"Mr. Valmont, I have come to ask you for your stepdaughter. May and I have learned, through an accident which very nearly cost the life of one of us—you have doubtless been informed of the affair?" Valmont nodded gravely -- "that we love each other. Doctor Wayne knows my antecedents and favors my suit, while you will know something of my eligibility when I tell you that I am a partner in the Wells-Larned Company, who can satisfy you in regard to my standing, socially and otherwise."

Valmont cleared his throat. During the few minutes occupied by the young man's speech his subtle mind had swiftly weighed the case. How much Huntingford knew or suspected he could not tell, but that Judith suspected the truth, he surmised from her words; and she would probably put Huntingford on his guard. At the best, Gripleigh's suit was now hopeless; for May would not marry against her will, and it was plainly to be seen that her heart was bestowed. Possibly a concession so important as the one asked would win the young man to his interest—at least, it

would give him time, he thought; and so, assuming a look of pleased surprise, he answered:

“Mr. Huntingford, though I know you very slightly, I read men easily, and I believe you to be a gentleman and an honest man. Beyond the influence of advice, I assume no control over May’s actions, and she is free to make her own choice, which will not be interfered with by me, unless I should discover grave reasons for disapproval. Doctor Wayne’s sanction is sufficient to satisfy me, and I shall place no obstacle in your way. I trust that we shall know each other and be friends.”

The *sang froid* of the man was so perfect that, for the moment, Huntingford believed in him, and when he rose and extended his hand, the young man grasped it almost warmly—a lover is unreasonably grateful to anyone that smiles, however perfunctorily, upon his passion. Huntingford uttered his thanks, and went down to rejoin the ladies, leaving Valmont alone.

When the door closed the smile vanished from the pale face, and a bitter imprecation rose to the thin lips. For once, at least, the master of diplomacy had miscalculated, and his tool had wounded his own hand. The very thing he had wished to avoid had happened, and an important part of his scheme had miscarried. Gripeigh could no longer hope to win May, and must be placated; Huntingford had, indeed, been prevented from visiting the mine on that particular day, but would he forego the visit to-morrow or

another day? Croitier, too, in his stupid resentment, had given cause for inquiries that might prove awkward; for, though Valmont fully justified in his own mind the use to which he had intended to put the Frenchman, this excess of zeal might involve him in grave trouble.

It is but just to the man to say that, at that moment, had he been scheming solely in his own behalf, he would have relinquished the business and let things take their course; for he was weary with the struggle, and age was beginning to tell upon his energies. But his character was not flexible, and he believed that with his plans the hope of the Jews must rise or fall; therefore, he were unworthy of his calling should he turn back now.

It remained for him, then, to accept the new conditions, and mold them, as best he might, to serve his ends. He must win Huntingford's friendship and support; though, upon calmer reflection, that task seemed more serious than it had appeared upon the spur of the moment. Anyway, he could but take up the broken threads of his design and tie them onto the altered plan. He must see the young man and express more warmly his satisfaction with the match; he must let May, also, understand that he approved of her choice, and that inquiry had utterly annulled his suspicions of the young man. With these purposes in view he went down stairs.

The parlor was empty, and on the veranda he found only Gripeigh, who was moodily walking.

off his bitterness and savagely gnawing an unlighted cigar.

"Well!" said the latter, as Valmont appeared, "is it settled?"

"Yes;" and Valmont sighed wearily. "Where are they now?"

"Over at Doctor Wayne's, I believe. I suppose you've done the best thing possible under the circumstances; but it's risky, my dear sir, very risky."

Gripleigh did not permit his chagrin and sense of defeat to interfere with his judgment. As nearly as it is possible for such a man to love, he had come to loving May, and his disappointment was not quite wholly on account of the fortune he had missed, though sentiment would have counted for little in his actions without it.

"Yes, my dear Frederick," Valmont answered, with a touch of kindness in his voice; "it was the only course open. May will not be controlled in such a matter, and there is no time for argument or persuasion. Besides, he must be won to our interest." He paused a moment, reflecting, and then continued: "It won't do any harm to tell you now that I had thought of something different for her—but there is no use in regretting."

Valmont took out a cigar, and after lighting it, passed the match to Gripleigh; then the two friends smoked in moody silence until Miss Waithe announced dinner.

The inhabitants of Adairsville were not excitable

people, but the story of the tragic adventure in the Indian Glen very soon spread throughout the county, and, as a topic of conversation, fairly eclipsed the historic debate itself. Even the approaching fall elections were forgotten for the time being; and a local earthquake or the suspension of the village bank would scarcely have turned the current of popular interest.

Many things that happened during the succeeding two or three days tended to keep this interest alive. The sheriff was put upon the track of the criminal, and aired his importance and his certainty of "getting the rights of the case" in every lounging resort of the town. A detective from New York was detailed; and if he said little, his reticence gave all the more play for imagination. Mr. Buchanan, also, was seen frequently at Doctor Wayne's house, and, observing this, the local oracles shook their heads sagely, and "allowed that ole Buck never gun over any thing, onc't he sot his mind to it."

So the story spread from mouth to mouth, and rumor grew with what it fed on, till Huntingford, when he appeared on the streets, found himself a more popular man than the candidate for the county sheriff's office. Various versions of the story were circulated, until, in the rivalry of telling them, it grew to be currently believed that Huntingford and Miss Larned, unarmed, had met and routed a band of desperadoes, numbering anywhere from ten to a hundred.

The general feeling, however, was of wonder.

These steady-going, orderly country people could not realize the fact that an event had actually broken out in the midst of them; and though they admitted the event, it was incredible to them. Possibly Miss Waithe gave the most characteristic expression to the popular sentiment, when, after the close of that eventful day, in the solitude of her own chamber, having laid aside her glossy hair and braided for the night the sparse locks that time had left her, she took the hair pins from her mouth, and solemnly lifting her hands in helpless wonder, ejaculated softly, "It do beat all! It do beat all!"

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## CHAPTER XX.

### ARRAIGNED.

Over Valmont and his friend Gripeigh the storm was gathering apace; but of the two, the latter was naturally less imperiled. Financially, he had risked little in the mine scheme; therefore, if it miscarried, his loss would be trifling, if he did not reckon in the wealth success might have brought. Besides, as yet he considered their hopes as threatened merely, not as lost. It was only in the struggle for Miss Larned's love that he had suffered a pronounced defeat.

To such men as he, women seem creatures of impulse. Miss Larned's preference for Hunting-



ford he regarded as a whim. But though he lacked skill in weighing motives, he saw at least, that as far as he was concerned, the struggle was over. Therefore, as the business that had required his presence in Adairsville was long since finished, he smothered his resentment and disgust as best he could, and went back to the city.

But on Valmont the shadows had fallen deep and black; for when he had leisure to reflect, this last event appeared to him, not as it had seemed to Gripeigh—a transient peril soon passed, but rather, an added roughness in his path—a more evident sign of the dangers about him. Often his mind recurred to it as a well-defined stage of his journey toward the ruin that the old rabbi foretold.

Looking back now, with many quakings of heart, over the way he had come, he saw that it was thickly set with these guide-posts to destruction. He noted how his machinations at the debate on the common, while the success he hoped for was still in doubt, had certainly resulted unfavorably in this—that they had introduced Huntingford to his ward's attention in the manner most unfavorable for his plans, and, in the person of Buchanan, had added to the list of his enemies an adversary that he dared not despise.

Then the form of the old rabbi rose before his thoughts, and, standing where the roads divided, seemed to lift his hands entreatingly, and repeat the substance of the solemn warning: "Traverse

not this way of darkness and destruction! Yonder, on this side, lies the eternal city; see, its golden turrets glitter in the sun!" And still Valmont had pushed on in his own way.

Then came Huntingford on his suspicious mission to Adairsville; his ward's friendship for that gentleman; Judith, and the doubts and fears she controlled; truly, the shadows were deepening, and the way was growing rough. At last, the attempted murder. Croitier had exceeded even his unspoken instructions; had attempted a deed that Valmont had never thought of—but attempting it had failed. Whether Croitier had understood that Huntingford's assassination was wished for by the manager, or whether he had gone to that extreme to gratify a personal hate, Valmont knew that the attempt might be traced to his prompting. Yet even that was of little account compared with the anxiety and terror that oppressed him as he calculated the chances that this shameful deed had of escaping investigation by the ever watchful, lynx-eyed power whose instrument he was. For its mystic ruler was just to friend and stranger alike, and his power to punish, though inscrutable, was limitless and absolute.

For two days Valmont lived in this suspense, veiling his nervousness with consummate skill under his usual calm and severe manner. Yet nothing happened to increase his trouble. The efforts of the authorities, urged by Huntingford and his friends, had resulted neither in bringing

the criminal to light, nor in establishing a theory that could account for the attempt; while from his Jewish brethren, also, nothing had menaced him. Therefore, as time went on, the outlook seemed to brighten; for, though the darkness did not lift, his eyes were growing accustomed to the gloom.

But his day of grace was brief; for in the afternoon of the second day he received at the mine a communication from Mr. Buchanan, which informed him, in a few concise but pregnant phrases, that there was on foot an examination of the affairs of the mine, in which it was hoped he would assist.

Behind this crisp and business-like document stalked disclosure and ruin. But the thoughts that this fresh complication called forth were almost immediately displaced by an event of still more serious import. His nerves, already overtaxed, were rudely shaken by the lawyer's message, and feeling that he was no longer sure of himself, he delayed his return to Adairsville until quite late in the evening, so that he might escape observation; and, on reaching his house, he went at once to the library.

Safe at last from suspecting eyes, with the door of the room closed behind him, he took a seat at the desk, whither the lamp, already lighted in expectation of his coming, invited him. As he did so, his eyes fell upon a handful of letters which Miss Waithe had placed in a compact pile exactly in the center of the desk-pad.

The evening mail, of course—he had almost forgotten that he might expect one. Now, though his thoughts were far away, he began to separate the letters, according to his custom, into several piles. This preliminary over, one letter was left by itself. It was a bulky document, yet compactly sealed, and addressed in a very legible, though angular hand. Valmont knew that handwriting, and felt that, of all the letters before him, this would prove the most important; therefore he had laid it by itself, to be the first read. He lifted it from the pad, and raised his knife several times to cut the envelope. Still it remained unopened; and he finally laid it aside, and turned his attention to the other letters, breaking their wrappers and reading them one after the other. While he was busy with them, sometimes his eyes ran rapidly over the lines, devouring the words, as if he was in haste to finish with all the minor matters, so as to be ready to open the important missive that lay at the bottom. Again, his glance would wander from the page at times, or, when he had finished reading a letter and laid it down, he would sit a long time, empty-handed and thoughtful, as if the lessening of the pile was a source of dread.

Nevertheless, at last these minor letters were all read, and he came face to face with the neat envelope and the plain, angular handwriting. Seizing the letter resolutely, he inserted the point of his knife and ripped the envelope open.

At the first words his head sank, and he rubbed

his eyes as if a mist had gathered before them; and for some time he sat motionless, leaning forward over the desk, with his head propped in his hands. The yellow lamplight fell warm and bright on the iron-gray hair and the long, slim fingers running through it; but his pale face beneath looked cold and ghastly in the shadow.

After a time, having summoned sufficient resolution, he took up the letter, and began again, holding it as far away as his sight would allow, as if there were danger in the sheets of paper themselves.

The stiff pages rattled, now and then, as he read:

“Jacob ben Naphthali:

“O, my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!’ For now the day of judgment is at hand for thee. The prince of the House of David, sitting on the throne of his fathers, in justice condemns thee; and I also—even I, O Absalom, my son!—speaking with the voice of the Patriarch of the West, condemn thee. But though my voice condemns thee—O rash, rash, willful and blind as thou hast been!—my heart is traitor to its trust, and pities thee; it would save thee.”

The mist gathered before his eyes; his head sank into his hands; and while he sat thus, a still, small voice in the depths of his heart was saying: “Yes, it is true; noble, generous Rabbi, you have been to me a father—tender, indulgent, solicitous. My ways have not always been your ways, but

my heart has gone out to you always—and now I have hurt you to the soul; oh, my father!”

More from pity for the grief that he recognized in the old man's language than for his own sad plight, his eyes were full of tears when he began to read again. Then, reading further, he felt that the death-blow had been given to his ambitious schemes. After calling attention to their last interview and the prophetic warnings uttered at that time, the Rabbi went on to show how those prophecies were now verifying; and Valmont, knowing well the power of the order to which he belonged, and the intricate but swift and certain means of communication that existed between its members, never ventured to doubt in the smallest particular the accuracy of the old man's information. First, and least important, he learned that the office-seeker upon whom he counted had fled to Canada, pending certain civil investigations into alleged malfeasance in his present office. Thus tacitly acknowledging his guilt, all hope of future political preferment for him might be considered at an end. But Valmont had little opportunity to consider how this suddenly discovered fraud and the consequent judgment would influence his plans; for the letter led him at once into more serious and personal matters.

Next, he read the history of his scheme to defraud his stepchild; and farther on, the letter showed him the forces that were arrayed against him; how they were gathering strength and making headway toward a crisis that was certain, and

for him ruinous. Nor did the letter stop with the facts that Valmont himself knew; it entered into details; it spoke of the characters of the different persons that were opposed to him, and with a definiteness that betrayed personal acquaintance with them; and hardest of all for Valmont to hear, it spoke of their cause as just. Hard enough it was for him to read on, knowing the certain end and purpose of the letter; to see his plans toppling to a hopeless ruin that until then he had never quite believed possible. Yet, harder still it was to feel that they themselves for whom he had risked these dangers found no excuses for him. Truly, the fruit of fraud was judgment, and evil works could not prosper in the sight of God.

Still he had not reached the dregs of his misery; even here there was no resting place, for the letter hurried him on. He learned that sealed orders were now on the way from Jerusalem, the nature of which, without breach of the most sacred obligations, the writer could not divulge; but they were of the gravest import. Therefore, he urged, Valmont should flee at once; then, perchance, these orders might not reach him, and in that case would remain null. Through this advice, disheartening as it was, a single faint ray of comfort shone into the darkness of Valmont's heart. For he knew well that in writing thus the old Rabbi had strained conscience and loyalty to their limits, and had done for the friend that ignored his counsels what he would have done for

no other, even himself. Realizing the depth of the Patriarch's love for him, a transient glow warmed his stony heart and filled his hot and aching eyes with tears.

“‘Escape for thy life,’” the letter said; “‘look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed!’ Flee! flee at once, my son; for the arrow is sped that seeks thy life, and must not find thee in its path. Up, and away! for thou rememberest the oath thou swore, with thy two hands laid upon the pall-covered ark, that His dictates should be thy law forever, unquestioned, though they commanded thee to slay thyself. I say not that this is the command that seeks thee—but it must not find thee! Up, and away! Thou rememberest, also, how, when the king of Jericho sent to the house of Rahab after the two spies that Joshua sent to spy out the land, she let them down by a cord from a window in the wall. And she said unto them, ‘Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned; and afterward may ye go on your way!’ So, unto thee, my son, I say, hide thyself—hide thyself even from me; for never again may these eyes behold thee, and never more may my voice speak to thee in tenderness. If we meet again, it will be by the will of the Mighty One of Israel, in whose hands we are as the rain, and the hail, and the thunder of his breath. If we meet again my hand must be against thee, O



my son, even as the hand of the Patriarch was raised against the life of the son whom he loved because he was the son of his old age; even as the hand of Jephthah, the Gileadite, was raised against the life of his daughter, who was his only child. For behold, I also have rent my clothes and cried, 'Alas, my son! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I can not go back.' Therefore, farewell; for now against thee the hand of Israel is red, and the heart of Israel is wroth, and for thee among the tents of Israel are none but the avengers of blood. Farewell; God do so to me and more also, if I love thee not better than my life!

MALACHI."

The letter fell to the desk. Valmont's head drooped until it rested in his hands; and there he sat silent, motionless, petrified. Heavy shadows lay upon his face; deeper, heavier, on his soul.

Yet, for all the Patriarch's words, the consciousness of crime was not with Valmont. His ambition was grand and holy in his eyes, and he had used, to the best of his ability, the tools that circumstances placed in his hands. His plans had miscarried; the tools had wounded him sorely; he must undergo judgment; the steady hand of justice was closing in about him, but he did not see nor feel it. Every other thought or terror was swallowed up in the agony of one who, having toiled painfully wearily up the rugged hills, finds *himself* suddenly on the brink of a chasm that

he can not cross, and sees the longed-for summit wreathed in sparkling sunshine far, far beyond.

The shading hands fell from his face, letting the mellow lamplight in. The sunken eyes opened, and through the lamplight and the gloom and the walls of the house he seemed to see, far away, a vision of the Holy City, its temples and palaces, and the lofty throne where he had hoped to sit. And in his rapt gaze was the same tearless agony that must have been in the eyes of the great Law Giver, when, from the mountain side, he saw the Promised Land, which he should never tread.

“O, thou Nameless One! is this the end?” he moaned.

In the silence that followed, something of his old resolution and daring seemed to be returning; but a stronger feeling met it, and it vanished.

“So be it!” he murmured. “No more for me the active struggle for my people. I yield, and go.”

He heard a soft sound, as of a door cautiously opened. Some guardian spirit dropped the mask of cold severity over his face, hiding its agony, and the inscrutable Valmont turned toward the sound.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## OSSA UPON PELION.

It was quite ten o'clock that night. The village lights had long been extinguished, except where here and there the lamp of some belated house-keeper sent out its lonely glimmer. Among these were a light in the dining-room of Mr. Valmont's dwelling, and one directly overhead in the library. In the second story sat the master of the house alone, and in the dining-room the indefatigable Jerusha was sprinkling down her clothes preparatory to the morrow's ironing. For Jerusha was, as our readers well know—or ought to know by this time, since they have been often enough reminded of the fact—an exceedingly methodical woman. In practice, paraphrasing the house-wife's golden rule—"a place for everything and everything in its place," she had a day for everything and everything in its day. There was Monday for washing, Tuesday for ironing, Wednesday for baking, Thursday for mending and going to the store, Friday for sweeping, and Saturday for baking again and setting things to rights against Sunday, for the express requirements of which holy day she devoutly believed man and the entire animal creation to have been designed. *Miss Waithe*—more fortunate than the majority

of her brethren and sisters of the nineteenth century—found in the entire Bible only one verse about the correct interpretation of which her mind harbored a single doubt; it is the verse that avers that the Sabbath was made for man; and not *vice versa*. More uncompromising than even the sacred volume itself, she added to its one unpardonable sin the state of total depravity that could do any work on Sunday, sweep on Monday, bake on Tuesday, or in any part discredit the superhuman wisdom that from the beginning ordained the setting apart of Sunday for solemn and godly exercise, Monday for washing, Tuesday for ironing, and so on to the end of the week, *in sæcula sæculorum*.

Secure in the consciousness of well-doing, Miss Waithe resolutely persevered in her clothes-sprinkling, occasionally biting off a yawn, with looks of self-reproach that would have frightened a child into fits. At her right hand upon the table stood a dish of water, into which she continually dipped her hand, and drew it out to flip the drops from her streaming fingers over the snowy muslin and linen which, when sufficiently moistened, she rolled into tight little bundles, and packed, piece by piece, into a huge clothes-basket standing on a chair at her left hand. She even sang as she worked, albeit her tones were not very melodious, nor the words of her song very inspiriting:

“Ye mortal men kum view the ground  
Where you must shortly lie!”

sang Miss Waithe; and so much did she admire the doleful sentiment that she repeated the verse *da capo*:

“Hark from the tombs a doleful sound!  
Mine ears attend the cry;  
‘Ye mortal men, kum view the ground  
Where you must shortly lie!’ ”

The dining-room window before her was open, and the rays from her lamp streamed out across the veranda and under the trees of the lawn till they met the convergent rays from Mr. Valmont's light overhead. Close beside the veranda, and almost directly in front of this window, grew a fine sugar maple, the spreading branches of which nearly brushed the library window above. Had Miss Waithe shifted her lamp but a single foot to the left, the light would have shone full upon this tree, and would have revealed the form of a man cautiously climbing its trunk. But the lamp remained in its place, and the intruder reached the branches above unseen. The foliage was thick, and afforded a secure screen for this prying personage, who cautiously peered from its shadows into the library.

“Bien!” muttered the spy, after a careful survey of the interior; “très bien! He is alone. It is *vaire* good!”

Then, with elaborate caution, he descended to the ground.

Miss Waithe once more repeated the general invitation to humanity, without distinction of

race, sex, or previous condition of servitude to inspect the cemetery:

“Ye mortal men kum view the ground  
Where you must shortly ——”

“My conscience, what was that!”

A noise as of a step upon the piazza brought the song to an abrupt stop. But when the singer reached the window and gazed out into the night, nothing suspicious was visible.

Presently she was back at her work, singing another dismal collection of ill verses upon a similar theme:

“‘My life, Thou knowest, is but a span,  
A cipher sums my years;  
And every man in best estate,  
But vanity appears.’”

If Jerusha had chanced now to look toward the window she would have comprehended the noise that frightened her a moment before. Stealthily, silently, there rose into view, first, the brim of a battered felt hat, then a low brow and a pair of malignant eyes, followed by a vulture nose and an ugly mouth, partly hidden in a growth of unkempt beard. The face was evil, and the malignant eyes gazed upon the singer and glanced about the room, studying its details.

“‘Man, like a shadow, vainly walks  
With fruitless cares opprest;  
He heaps up wealth, but can not tell  
By whom ’twill be possest,’”——

the singer continued, never raising her eyes from her work,

Not a sound, not a motion, betrayed the watcher's presence, though he muttered under his breath,—

"Sacrament! ven shall la belle feenish wiz ze chant? It grow always later, old one—allons!"

Suddenly the face disappeared; Miss Waithe having packed the last garment into the basket, took the light and went into the kitchen after a new supply.

Scarcely had she disappeared, ere the man sprang noiselessly into the room and hurried through the opposite door into the hall.

A moment later Miss Waithe, returning with a fresh basket of clothes, noticed upon the carpet under the open window a spot of dust.

"Wall, I do declare t' goodness!" she ejaculated, setting down the basket and the lamp in no gracious mood; "ef it aint sweep an' dust—dust an' sweep, from mornin' till night, week in an' week out; and then things aint never clean!" With which protest against the powers of uncleanness she proceeded, with dust-brush and pan, to remove the offense.

Meanwhile Croitier—for it was he—cautiously felt his way up the stairs to the second story. He was familiar with this part of the house; for during the days of his foremanship at the mine, confidential business with the manager had given him many opportunities for thoroughly inspecting it. Therefore he found no difficulty in making his way silently to the end of the passage, where a gleam of light showed under the library door.

He turned the knob slowly, and pushed the door open. It creaked faintly on its hinges, and when the intruder peered cautiously into the room, he found the occupant's eyes fixed upon him. Seeing that he was detected, he went forward boldly.

Mr. Valmont looked at the Frenchman inquiringly, and asked, "Well, Croitier, what now? Has anything gone wrong?"

Croitier answered sullenly:

"Is it zat ze master make a mock of me? Everything has gone wrong."

"Well, I have nothing to do with that. What do you want?" Valmont demanded coldly.

"I desire to speak wiz you, sir."

"Then," said Valmont, "you should come to me during the day at the mine. I have no time to give you here. Who let you in?"

An angry flush mounted to Croitier's cheek, and in answering he used French phrases, as was his habit under excitement:

"Monsieur know très bien zat it is impossible à présent zat I mek him la visite en plein jour. I let myself in, and me voici; behold me! I've affaire wiz ze Monsieur, vich I've thought it is better zat la vielle who is beneath, shall not suspect: it is why I've come in by ze way of ze window, and save her the trouble to annonce me."

"Well, then," said Valmont, "you can leave as you came; and your affairs will have to wait *until to-morrow*. If you can not come to me by



day-light, like an honest man, it is not my fault. I have business on hand, and can spare you no time to-night. He turned toward the desk, and took up his pen.

"Ah!" Croitier exclaimed, breathing hard with anger, and advancing a step nearer; "is it so? Ma foi, does Monsieur despise me? Will Monsieur, par exemple, renounce me à présent? Eh bien, nous verrons! We shall see! My beezness to me also, it is très important, and will not attend. Desire Monsieur zat I speak, or shall I depart?"

Valmont regarded the Frenchman with some curiosity. The bold vehemence of the fellow surprised him; and after a momentary reflection, he said:

"Well, what is your business? Be brief; for I have no time to waste." After all, this seemed the easiest way to rid himself of the intruder.

Although Croitier had been speaking in a low tone, he dropped his voice almost to a whisper: "There is none to hear?"

"No, no," Valmont answered, impatiently.

"What is your business? Hurry!"

Croitier leaned toward him and said in a whisper: "It regard a r-rascal who 'ave insult me, and 'ave escape my vengeance."

The Frenchman's evil eyes searched Valmont's face.

The latter gave no sign of having comprehended the suggestion in this reply. He responded quite composedly, "What has that to do with me?"

“Monsieur wish zat I shall enlighten,” demanded Croitier, folding his arms and smiling sardonically. “Monsieur demand zat I rispond. Bien! One name Croitier ’ave receive of insult of un certain, name Huntingford. C’est égale! Ce Croitier, he is Français; more, he is Courreur de Bois. Ze insult, it is impossible zat it pass. This Croitier await. He attend. ‘Patience,’ he say, ‘ca ira.’ It will go. Ze day arrive. Croitier shoot well. He direct ze rifle. He shoot. But by chance inattendu, ze shot miss. Ze r-rascal escape. It is done, and ze law, which I despise, demand partout, where is this Croitier? ferons l’arrêter! Let us arrest him. But he conceal him at present. This is well. But le jour arrivera—make no doubt, Monsieur, ze day arrive, when the law secure Croitier, and demand certain questions to him. It demand, par exemple, ‘Who is Croitier?’ Some one respond, ‘He ’ave been ze foreman to Monsieur Valmont.’ Still it demande, ‘Why ’ave he been discharge?’ Another make risponse, ‘He is chassé because he ’ave querrelle with this Huntingford.’ Then, Monsieur, all is lost for poor Croitier. They conduct him to ze prison. It is har-rd. Mais, Monsieur, to me la liberté c’est la vie—it is life! No more can I remain silencieux. What will Monsieur? I speak. I say, ‘Messieurs les Juges, it is ze truth, that I have make ze attempt against Monsieur Huntingford; but pardon! I ’ave not act for Croitier alone!’ Les Juges demand to enlighten. What would Monsieur? La liberté, it is all to me. I

respond again"—Croitier paused, and leaning once more toward his former employer, continued deliberately—"Demand of Monsieur Valmont, who 'ave discharge me, but who 'ave continue to pay me my price!"

Valmont sprang to his feet, and his eyes blazed with unwonted passion, as he exclaimed, "You scoundrel! What do you mean?"

Up to this point, he had been paying but little attention to the Frenchman's words; but, more than half preoccupied with the import of the letter that still lay on the desk beside him, had been idly fumbling its pages with one hand, while waiting for the man to finish. He had not deemed Croitier either bold enough or shrewd enough to attempt blackmail, and the concluding sentence startled him into attention. The sheets of the Rabbi's letter were scattered over the floor.

Croitier shrugged his shoulders, and unperturbed by Mr. Valmont's excitement, answered with something very like a sneer:

"Rien du tout—nothing whatever; but ze law require ze truth, and it need that one speak it. Hêlâs! it is thousan' pity zât ze law become so curieux to cause of annoyance by ze question impolite to a Monsieur who is so grand as Monsieur Valmont. Eh, bien; it is one bête worl'."

"You miserable villain!" said Valmont, still quivering with wrath, "I have a mind to pitch you through the window. Now, will you—"

"Ah! well," interrupted the wily Frenchman, spreading the palms of his hands downward; "it

is nothing to me. I will retire. A présent I have grand need for a friend. If Monsieur Valmont chase me; maybe that Monsieur Huntingford assist me. Pardon, Monsieur, if I have cause of annoyance. Bon soir, Monsieur!" and he turned away as if to leave.

"Stop!" commanded Valmont.

Croitier paused. Mr. Valmont appreciated the possible danger that lay in the Frenchman's resentment. Although but a day was needed to complete his arrangements for flight, that day was indispensable; therefore, his better judgment counselled compromise with the blackmailer. Besides, he realized that, though he was not responsible for Croitier's evil nature, it was through his indirect prompting that the man had fallen into the present awkward predicament. It was, therefore, partly this knowledge, and partly, also, a sudden impulse to make his last act before abandoning his old life and old associations, a worthy one; a yearning prompted by some gentler sentiment of his nature, to preface his renunciation by an act of kindness, that suddenly decided him to aid Croitier to a better mode of life.

The Frenchman sullenly waited for him to speak, and when the manager finally continued, his tone was so strangely altered, that Croitier stared at him in astonishment:

"Well, my man; what is it you wish?"

"I am poor," Croitier grumbled; "and it is well zat one prepare against ze chance. It may be zat soon my health require a change of ze air,

ze climate of zis State become each day more oppressive to me. Monsieur know zat I have not been elevate in ze labor of ze mine; me, I am of ze woods. Zere, where one is fr-ree; where one feel la liberté, one labor to-day here, to-morrow zere, and—and—how to say it?—everything va au mieux. Mais ici—but here, Monsieur, I am as a slave; I have sickness for ze woods; I have ze spirit sick; I have ze heart discontent! It is why I drink and querrelle, and impatient me against all. I would return to ze forest once more, and be fr-ree!”

The Indian blood of the man spoke in his enthusiastic appeal for liberty, and in his impatience against the restraints of civilized life; and Valmont reflected that it might be well to give him the chance for which he longed.

The manager began with an admonition: “My advice is that you quit drinking, give up playing the vagabond, and become an honest man. You have no chance for that here, and your best course is to leave the country—”

“Mais, Monsieur,” Croitier interrupted, with a smile of irony, “how to leave ze contree ven I am poor? To voyage require bien d’argent, and me, I am poor.”

“Just so,” Valmont responded, seating himself again; “and for that reason I am going to make you a proposition. Pay strict attention to what I am about to say. If I should decide *to help* you, how much money would induce you *to leave* this State at once, and turn honest?”

"Now," exclaimed the Frenchman, showing all his teeth," Monsieur, always so generous, become himself once more! If I go to Canada, I may become again, maybe, a voyageur, or a courrier—mon père, vous savez, il était courrier de bois, and me also, I was long ago courrier. But it is an expense. Ze bateau cost much; ze tools for to hunt, also. Mais, what do I say! It require, perhaps, a thousan' dollaire—but a thousan' dollaire, behold, it is a bagatelle to Monsieur Valmont, who is rich; yet to poor Croitier it is a grand fortune!"

"Enough," Valmont returned. "If you will promise me to go at once to Canada, and become an honest river pilot, or whatever you like best, so long as it is an honest business, I will give you a thousand dollars. But remember this: it is not because I fear you; it is merely because I wish to give you a chance. I am no more responsible for your crimes than I am for your drunkenness; and if you dare again to hint of such a thing, I myself will hand you over to the law of which you stand in such proper dread; then you can try your plan. Now, you know me to be a man of my word, and can make your own choice. Do you accept my conditions?"

Croitier became at once apologetic.

"Monsieur is so quick; he comprehend not ze pleasanterie!"

"Do you accept my conditions?" the Manager repeated.

The smile died from the Frenchman's lips, as,

with the slightest possible lifting of one shoulder, he answered:

“But, yes; certainement!”

“And you will leave this country, never to return?”

“Mais, oui!”

“And will lead a sober, honest life?”

“Upon honneur, oui; upon ze honneur of un Français.”

He drew himself up proudly, emphasizing the last word.

Valmont regarded the man steadily for a moment, and then said, “Well, I will try you; but, as I do not rely much on promises, I shall take pains to see that you keep your word. Go where you may, I have friends that will watch you; and if ever I find that you have broken faith, I have means to punish you. Never forget that”

He took up his pen, and wrote in Hebrew an order for one thousand dollars. Then he took out his pocket-book and gave the man fifty dollars. “This,” said he, “will pay your fare to Montreal, and keep you until you arrive. You will have to make your way out of this State on foot, so as to escape the ‘law,’ and take the railroad somewhere across the lake in New York, or across the border in Canada. Can you find the way?”

“With facility. Often I have made ze voyage.”

“Very good. You will buy a ticket for Montreal; and when you arrive, take this letter at

once to the banker Moïse Dutro, number 27, Rue Dumont. Do you know the street?’

“Ah, certainement.”

“That is well. See, I have written the address on the back of the letter. Give it to him, and he will pay you a thousand dollars, without asking any questions. Now go; I will see you to the door.”

The Frenchman’s face beamed, and an expression of amazed gratitude had replaced the habitual malignity of his features, and he seized Valmont’s hand and covered it with kisses, sobbing out his thousand, thousand thanks.

But Valmont cut the demonstrations short, saying, as he took up the lamp, “Come, there is no time to loose. Only prove yourself worthy of generosity, and that will be sufficient thanks.”

Shortly afterward a shadow stole silently from the verandah across the lawn, dodging behind a tree, as Miss Waithe, having finished her labors, leaned out to close the window.

When, a few minutes later, that pattern of all the virtues, mounted, candle in hand, to her bed room in the top story of the house, she muttered, as she passed her employer’s door, “‘Airly to bed, an’ airly to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, an’ wise’—leastways, thet’s what I’ve allus heerd. But ef so be as its true, some folks hereabouts won’t be nuther the one nur yit the tother.” With which bodeful phophecy, the astute lady entered the sanctity of her own vestal chamber, whither profane thought dares not follow.



## CHAPTER XXII.

“FROM THE FUTURE BACK TO THE PAST.”

Valmont's determination to follow the Rabbi's advice, leave Adairsville and hide himself from retribution, could not be shaken. Once he had the courage to rebel in secret against the authority of his order; but at that time it seemed possible, through success, to gain absolution for his rebellion. Lately, however, the conclusion had been forced upon him that success was very doubtful; and now the old man's letter established beyond question the fact that his plans had failed and his cause was irretrievably lost.

Henceforth, lofty ambition would be but childish delusion; and, as every moment was of inestimable value, he began at once his preparations for departure. Not as a thief, who at the first suspicious noise in his neighborhood, gathers his plunder and flees by the nearest avenue of escape; but as a skillful general, who, having found a position untenable, arranges his forces for a dignified and deliberate retreat.

Many of the sorrows that would have afflicted average humanity in the midst of preparations for so suddenly disrupting old associations did *not* affect him; and in so much was he spared. *His* ambition for the future of his race, growing

stronger with his years, had absorbed into itself all lesser sentiments; excepting his affection for the old Rabbi, he had no ties of love, nor of friendship even, that must be broken. Bound by most sacred obligations to hold himself a slave to his order, knowing that at any moment a summons might come calling him to the antipodes, he had never allowed himself to become rooted to the soil in any place, but had always kept the bulk of his fortune in such shape that, though scattered all over the world, by a few strokes of the pen it might be transferred whithersoever he wished. As for the rest of his property, such as landed possessions, which could not be handled quite so deftly, papers executed in years gone by and kept in his safe would, when brought to light, at once transfer his title to a new owner; who was, it is needless to say, a member of that order for whose aggrandizement he worked and was willing to die.

He was spared the grief of parting from beloved friends; spared also more selfish regrets at being obliged to leave much of his hard-earned property in alien hands; for, in the first place, he had no friends, and in the second, his wealth might be taken with him. Still, if such feelings did not wring his heart-strings, so much the more was his mind left a prey to the tortures of disappointed ambition.

Often during that night, after Croitier left him, while making the pen strokes necessary to secure his fortune, he would stop—pen in hand; his form would become rigid, his eyes dull and ex-

pressionless, and his face would slowly take on a look of intense misery. Thus he would sit, unconscious of time, in the midst of deathly silence, until his colorless lips parted and let a low, moaning sound escape them. Then he would awake to himself, and his pen, with renewed energy, would trace line after line.

The lamplight streaming out from his room, met, at last, the first rays of dawn. Still the man at the desk had not finished his preparations.

At last his task was done. He had separated his own property from that of others. The ambition that had controlled him and often stifled his nobler traits of character, was now removed, leaving those traits free play; therefore, amongst the wealth that he had transferred out of the reach of others, there was nothing to which he could not justly lay claim. And he was ready to depart alone, into the midst of strangers; banished from the order that had been his home, bereft of the ambition that had been his life. Yet, though hopeless and discouraged, love for his people had not left him, nor his power to help them, even if this was now circumscribed, and limited to the relations of man with man. He could no longer hope to guide a people upward: he might, however, still lighten the burdens of individuals.

The next morning, when he came to the breakfast table, the women quickly saw that some great misfortune had overtaken him. Judith and May ascribed it to a dread of the pending investigation

into his management. Yet, though their suspicions were hardening into conviction, they could not altogether silence the pity that his haggard face and sunken eyes inspired. He said nothing either to dispel or to confirm their conclusions; and shortly after breakfast, got into his buggy, and drove away to the mine.

At his office he seemed to his office associates more than usually busy and silent.

Huntingford and Buchanan called that afternoon on a preliminary visit, when the employés were surprised to see him neglect his own business, and take the visitors under his personal guidance, giving them hours of his valuable time. Huntingford and the lawyer were also startled by the change in Valmont's face; but he seemed to enter so frankly into the spirit of their investigation, that their suspicions were for the moment somewhat allayed. He seemed to have no wish for concealment; nay, it even seemed as if he intended to confirm their suspicions of mismanagement; although, indeed, he left it sufficiently vague as to the proper place to look for proofs.

But, above all, they wondered at the strange way in which they had been received. They had come armed with authority, prepared for a battle of words and wits, at the least. They had not been asked to show their authority, and the interview was free from bitterness.

They drove back to the village by way of the Allandale turnpike; but Valmont, when he returned, took, for purposes of his own, the round-

about way leading down the opposite side of the Wanato, around behind the hills that shut in the Indian Glen, and through the village of Iron-ton, entering Adairsville by the road that Huntingford and Miss Larned had taken for their horse-back rides toward the mine. On reaching his home, he disappeared into his library, where none of his household thought it best to disturb him. The dinner hour came, bringing him for a short time into view; but he ate scarcely anything, and when the meal was over, returned to the library.

There was nothing strange in his actions. At another time they would not have caused remark, and even now Miss Waithe suspected nothing. If she saw that Mr. Valmont was troubled, she sympathized with him. Further than this, it was none of her business, and she kept the even tenor of her way. But to Judith and May there was an indescribable something in the expression of Mr. Valmont's face, and in his manner, that they could not account for, and consequently dreaded. The very air about them seemed tremulous with suspense. The slightest sound made them start and tremble. Their conversation was almost monosyllabic, leaving pauses during which they might strain eyes and ears to catch the first sign of the blow both felt was sure to fall.

Great was their relief when, as the twilight was fading, May, from her station at the window, called to Judith that Mr. Huntingford was coming, and hastened down the stairs to meet him.

Huntingford was on horseback, and rode across the lawn to the edge of the veranda, where May awaited him. The height of the piazza placed them on a level.

"I am so glad you have come!" she said.

Then there was an eloquent pause, after which she continued somewhat irrelevantly, "But you mustn't do that; the Belchers might see us!"

"I think they must have seen us. Can't you see Mrs. Belcher's merry little eyes twinkling over there?" and he looked toward the next house, in distinct in the gloom. "By the way, there's something funny about her eyes, though; see how they dance every way."

"Those are fire-flies, child; how can you be so frivolous!"

"You would be inclined to 'frivol,' if you had spent the day with a man that showed a strong inclination to talk you deaf, dumb, and blind. All in your service, too, mind you. Isn't that worth something, even if the eyes of the whole Belcher family were upon us?" May could not find the heart to refuse him any trifle.

Now, Lucifer had striven to overlook such goings-on when he first noticed them, on the return from the Indian Glen, but he could do so no longer, and showed his disapproval by a snort and a step or two away from the veranda.

"Steady, old boy!" said Huntingford to his horse. "You and I shall have a falling-out if you act like this. But that reminds me; Lucifer and I took dinner at Mr. Buchanan's. I haven't

seen the Doctor since morning, and it is high time I put in an appearance. I'll leave the horse there, and come back."

"No, don't do that," May cried quickly. "Why not tie Lucifer in our stable?"

"But the Doctor?" Huntingford suggested, with a smile.

"Do you think he is very anxious about you?" May asked shyly, in answer. "Come, I will go to the stable with you, and help you make Lucifer comfortable."

The horse started off with a bound that made Huntingford gather up the reins quickly. "I believe he's delighted that you are interested in his comfort; but if he doesn't calm these transports, he'll spill me in the road."

He reached the steps, however, without mishap, and there dismounting, joined May; and between them, they led the horse to the stable.

"Thomas!" called May in silvery tones, when they came to the door.

"Thomas!" roared Huntingford. But the silvery tones and the roar were alike ineffectual. Thomas did not appear.

"Thomas must be out 'sparking!' as they say," said Huntingford; "and we'll have to tie the horse ourselves."

Groping about above their heads, they soon found the two rings that hung down over the open floor; and anchoring Lucifer securely between them, they returned to the house. And there, an hour later, Doctor Wayne, who had

grown somewhat uneasy at Huntingford's continued absence, found them.

After the old gentleman had listened to a jesting explanation of the young man's delay, he asked for Judith—and May went into the house to call her. But she soon returned with the surprising information that Mrs. Reitz was not to be found.

Judith, indeed, was not in the house. Coming downstairs shortly after May had called to her that Huntingford was there, she found the two sitting on the veranda talking so confidentially together, that she determined not to disturb them; and, turning back, with a sigh of relief that her young friend had been able to shake off the anxieties of the hour, she passed through the house to the veranda at the side.

There she sat down, thinking that the soft, cool night wind would relieve the tension of her nerves. The moon, already nearly at the full, was just rising above the tree-tops, shortening the long, black shadows that lay across the lawn and the driveway. Presently she thought she saw a man walking toward the stable—in a moment she was sure of it; for a form that was certainly Valmont's, stood out, clear and distinct, against the background of bright moonlight on the front of the building. A moment later, the black figure had disappeared through the doorway into the darkness. He had something in his hand: "I wonder what it is," she thought; and, without waiting to consider, she, also, left the house, and hurried toward the stable.



At first, she could see nothing in the darkness within the building; but gradually the outlines of objects became distinguishable. She saw the black horse standing in the middle of the floor, motionless and silent; and she fancied that the head of the beast was stretched out, watching and threatening her. Then she imagined that the other horses all had turned in their stalls, to stare at her. But presently she heard a sound—the footsteps of a man in an adjoining room—and saw the faint rays of a light behind a partly closed door.

Mustering her faltering courage, she glided toward the door. The footsteps grew louder, and the light brighter; the door swung wide open, and Valmont met her face to face.

“Ah!” he gasped, and fell back a step, startled by the sudden meeting.

She saw by the light of the lantern he was carrying in one hand, that a small traveling bag swung from his shoulder, and that he held a saddle and bridle in his other hand.

“You startled me, Judith,” he said, after a pause. “Do you want anything? Is anything the matter?”

She nerved herself for the ordeal, and answered, “Yes; I have something to ask you. Won’t you come back to the house?” She thought to gain time.

“I’m afraid I can not now,” he said smoothly; “I am in a hurry: I must send off these letters”—motioning, with the hand that held the lantern, toward the bag hanging from his shoulder—“by



*"I am again only a man, Judith, weak, selfish and loving."* Page 32

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the ten o'clock train. Why can't you say what you wish to here? We are alone;" and he looked around to verify his words.

"No, no," she cried, almost impatiently: "I can not speak of it here. Won't you come back with me?"

"It is impossible; I must be off;" and he started toward the stalls.

Wrought up to a fever of excitement, Judith caught him by the arm. "No, no; you must not go—not yet!" Valmont stopped and regarded her inquiringly—"Not—not"—Judith trembled and choked—"not with those papers! It is for your own sake that I am pleading. You shall not go!"

For a moment he stood motionless, forgetting to answer, as he gazed down into the anxious face and the great imploring eyes raised to his. Then he dropped the saddle to the floor, and indicating a stool by the barn door, said very gently, "Sit down there; I have something to tell you;" and Judith obeyed mechanically, unmindful of the change in his tone. To her mind it was certain that, once away from the village, he would never return, and that the bag he carried contained, not letters to be posted, but a part, at least, of May's fortune. Yet how to keep him was the question. She might call assistance; but the matter did not yet seem to demand it. Therefore, she took the indicated seat, and with as much calmness as she could muster, waited for him to begin; while she kept repeating to herself, "He shall not go! He

shall not rob her! He may kill me; but he shall not go!"

And Valmont, when he had placed the lantern where its light could not be seen from the house, returned to her side, and stood with one hand resting on a brace of the barn door, as he bent over her. The satchel had swung in front of him, and she could dimly see the long, slim fingers of his free hand resting upon the closed mouth of it. Behind it, his tall form towered, vague and shadowy. Finally, in a voice subdued and slow, yet trembling with earnestness, he spoke :

"It is many years, Judith, since destiny forced me to do you a great wrong. I bear the blame of it. That is natural and just. Yet it was not I that wronged you, but an ambition grander than any conceived by mortal man since the time of him who spoke on Sinai, face to face with God—do not interrupt me, but listen!"

It was the same old story of an ambition, the grandeur of which she could never hope to grasp. Yet the fire that at another time might have flashed from her eyes, and the sharp words she might have said, were now restrained by deeper feelings—"He shall not escape; he must not go."

It was noteworthy, also, that, as he continued, she felt that his words were more earnest than ever before, and that they had a greater power over her. Bewildering thoughts possessed her brain, and she shuddered to find herself almost believing in him. Yet this was not strange; for his ambition being gone, he cast aside deception

as a thread-bare garment, and spoke the simple truth. He continued :

“This high ambition spoke to me as the voice of Israel’s God. As unto Moses, He cried to me, ‘I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, up out of Egypt.’ The spirit of the Everlasting was upon me, Judith, and I obeyed. What to me was love, or home, or kindred, when the sign of the Most High flamed before me in the Heavens, and His voice thundered in my soul !

“Well, I went forth; and for years I have labored, for years I have fought upon the side of God and Gideon, taking no thought for myself, but only that Israel through me might find her deliverance. For this I left what men call honor, faith, duty, and truth, behind me. Sword in hand, striking down the enemies of God and Israel, I have spared neither friend nor foe, youth nor age, man nor woman; all this, that, according to the commandment I received, Israel might come up out of bondage, and become a mighty people. You are a Hebrew, Judith; can not you feel the sublimity of my vision ?”

Valmont paused, and Judith, without daring to look at him, felt that he no longer leaned toward her, that his form had become erect and rigid, while his voice had the tone, not of one speaking to a listener, but of one who thinks aloud.

Her nervousness increased, and though her determination to prevent his escape was not

diminished, her confidence in her ability to control him was shaken. "Why does not some one come?" she thought.

Then Valmont, passing one hand across his eyes, leaned again toward her, and continued: "Well, it is over. The vision has vanished. I am abandoned by them for whom I wrought; cursed by them I served. Instead of receiving a crown of reward, I must flee from the sentence of the Judge. That is my purpose here to-night. It is useless to disguise it; had you not appeared, I should be miles from here by this time."

"Ah!" ejaculated Judith. But there was nothing in her tone to show that she was pleased at this confirmation of her suspicions. "He shall not go!—he shall kill me first!" her heart still said, and she cast a nervous, anxious look around for help.

Valmont leaned closer over her, and said: "The years of struggle are past; my ambition has been taken away. It will never return; and I am again only a man, Judith, weak, selfish, and loving. Can you not comprehend my motives? At least, will you not respect them and forget and forgive your wrongs? I would take you with me, Judith; for I loved you—I still love you, better than Jacob loved Leah; though I have valued the chosen of Jehovah above the desires of my own heart."

Judith struggled to her feet, and gazed around aimlessly. "Yes, it is the old story; go with you *and* be deceived again," she said bitterly.

"No, never again. The cause for deception is

gone—come!” and he reached out his hand to take hers.

But she drew back; and feeling more sure of herself, asked, “Then why do you go?”

“Because I must. I can not explain; but I must go.”

“But, believe me, there is no reason why you should. For days I have known something of your plans, and I know that May is tender-hearted. If you have wronged her, she will forgive you gladly, if you do what is right now.”

Valmont’s tone grew more and more severe, as he answered:

“You wrong me, Judith! Whether I have attempted it or not, I have done her no injury. I do not fear her judgment, nor anything she or her friends might do to me. I fear the judgment and go at the command of one far, far above them.”

Valmont paused; but before Judith could gather words to reply, he continued: “You think, perhaps, that I am taking away with me something that belongs to her; you wrong me again. When I am gone, you will know that I speak the truth.”

“Then you will give me those papers?” she said, pointing at his satchel.

“They are mine,” he answered sternly; “absolutely and justly mine;” and his right hand closed firmly over the clasp of the bag.

“I do not believe you!” she answered sharply; “and if you do not yield and come back to the house, I will call for help.” Then her tone changed



to entreaty, and she begged him to return with her.

In the midst of her pleading he turned sadly but resolutely away, and stooped to take up his lantern; for he had lingered too long already.

She seized him by the arm, and opened her lips to cry out; but her cry was short. Impelled by the instinct of self-preservation, Valmont put his hand over her mouth and tore himself from her hold. When he released her, she uttered a gasping cry and started to run, but overcome by nervous excitement, stumbled and fell fainting outside the barn door.

Miss Waithe, standing before her window, and wondering at the dim light in the barn, heard the stifled cry and saw the woman's form fall out into the moonlight. She left the window, and hurried from the house to offer assistance; but when she again came in sight of the barn, she saw something that made her hesitate: a man on horseback, just turning into the lane that led around the end of the barn and down the hill toward the river. Miss Waithe was panic-stricken; for the sight of the retreating horseman suggested unexpected possibilities of crime; so she turned back to the house, and alarmed May and the two gentlemen on the veranda.

They all hurried to the stable, to find Judith just recovering from unconsciousness. "Where is he?" she asked, confusedly.

"Whom do you mean?" they demanded.

"Why, Mr. Valmont."

“Was he here?” Doctor Wayne asked.

“Yes!” and looking quickly around—“He is gone!—and where is the horse?”

Lucifer was not to be seen; and the light of the lantern showed only the saddle and the bridle lying where Valmont had dropped them on the floor.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### ACQUITTED.

Between the Wanato river on the north and the east, the Ironton road on the south, and the Paley, Ironton & Champlain Railroad on the west, lie fifty-odd square miles of rugged and almost inaccessible hills. These hills are, for the most part, still clad in primeval forest; but the hand of the wood-chopper has been raised against their timber, and it is easy to foresee the day when these heights will loom bald and desolate; for the railroad has made this wood valuable, and it is rapidly falling. But at present, the forest stands practically untouched. Here and there, beside the track, stands a saw-mill, while in some of the secluded hollows among the higher hills, charcoal burners have pitched camps, around which cleared spaces, with white-topped stumps and blackened circles, are continually spreading.

About midway between the river and the railroad, and some distance south of the mine, in a

wild dell of the mountains, one of these camps was situated.

The place was practically out of reach, and here a man wishing to escape observation, could have lived secure for months, though within a few miles of Adairsville. In fact, it was here that Croitier successfully baffled the pursuit of the county sheriff and the New York detective; sharing the cabin and the labors of an old crony, Tim Flahy. Croitier had consulted with Flahy before visiting Valmont, and it was agreed between them that if the scheme proved successful, they would go together to Canada, and seek fortune in company.

The Frenchman had been gone for hours, and Flahy was growing impatient. He had made the round of the half-dozen miniature volcanoes for the twentieth time, widening an air-hole here, narrowing another there, and mending with spadefuls of earth or turf, threatened breaks in the great hemispherical mounds of smoldering fire. Now he sat down upon a stump, smoking a short clay pipe, and waiting. The air was cool, but motionless, and not a leaf stirred among the dark trees around. Even the katydids and crickets were hushed, and besides the smothered snapping of the charring wood in the black mounds, nothing was heard except the occasional plaint of a screech owl, or the distant barking of a fox.

Flahy smoked calmly for a time; then he began to show signs of uneasiness. He rose to his feet, and listened intently; then sat down again, muttering to himself :

"He's the divil's own time about it! The moon will be down more nor an hour. I wonder what it will be that's keepin' him." A curl of luminous smoke from the side of one of the mounds attracted his attention.

"The ould Scratch is got in them, the night," he ejaculated, taking his spade and proceeding to stop the leak. "I tould Tiddy he were not layin' the dirt thick enough; but yez might as lave raison wid a pig!"

He stuck the spade upright into the ground, and finding by experimental puffs, that his pipe was out, knelt before the opening in the side of the mound, and with his hand deftly transferred a live coal to his pipe. Then he returned to his seat upon the stump, where he smoked and waited.

Suddenly, a rustling in the foliage behind him attracted his attention. "Ah, there ye are, ye snail!" he exclaimed, rising. But a prolonged wail from one of the branches overhead undeceived him. "Dom the bird!" he muttered, as he sat down again. The owl, unterrified by the malediction, continued its plaint. Flahy found a stone, with which he frightened the creature away. Then he took his pipe from his mouth, and began whistling.

In the midst of the tune, Croitier stepped out of the dark woods, and stood before him. The whistling ceased abruptly, and Flahy sprang eagerly to his feet.

"Well, Parley-voo, ye've come at last!" he

exclaimed. "It's a fine time of the night to be interin' a gintleman's parly! Now, where have yez been spendin' ye'r time?"

Croitier stood his rifle against a stump and sat down. Flahy followed his example, and waited while the Frenchman rolled and lighted a cigarette. Then the latter said:

"What matter ze time, if I have meet wiz success?"

"The divil ye have!" ejaculated Flahy, drawing the pipe-stem from his mouth.

"Vraiment, I have," nodded the Frenchman. "I have secure ze money zat shall procure to us ze passage into Canada, and also a paper which direct one at Montreal to pay me a thousan' dollar, upon ze nail."

"Oh, that's it, is it!" Flahy responded, with diminished animation. Then he added quickly, "How much cash did yez say there be's?"

"Fifty dollar; it is assez," the Frenchman answered.

"It's what?" demanded Flahy.

"It is assez—sufficament—how you call it?—enough!"

"Aw; that's what yez mean—aw yes—enough."

Flahy puffed noisily at his pipe for a few moments, in profound cogitation. Then he knocked out the tobacco against the side of the stump whereon he sat, watching the sparks as they followed the seams of the bark to the ground. Finally he said, "Wait here a bit;" and taking up his spade, he went the rounds of the ovens. When

he returned, he asked, "Have yez the bit of writin' wid yez—the letter, I mean?"

"But yes, certain," Croitier answered, eagerly drawing it from his bosom.

"Let's have a squint apan that same, in the shanty." He led the way, and Croitier followed, to a rude hut built of undressed slabs, close at hand.

Flahy struck a match, and taking from the shelf that ran along one side of the cabin, a bottle with a candle in it, lighted the latter, and set it upon the pine table in the center of the little room.

"Set down," he said, kicking a stool toward his companion. Then he procured from the shelf a tall, black bottle and two tin cups, which he set upon the table beside the unconventional candlestick; and drawing up the remaining stool that the room afforded, seated himself opposite the Frenchman. He drew the cork from the black bottle, and pushed a tin cup across to his companion. "Try a sup of the craythur," he said, cordially.

"Merci," said the Frenchman, "but I have abandon to drink."

Flahy's mouth dropped open in amazement. "Yez have quit drinkin'," he ejaculated; "Well, be all the powers!—faith, it's jokin' ye are. Take a bit, and pass the stuff, lad; for I'm dry as spunk."

But Croitier still refused.

"Well, be the bones of the howly Saint Pat-

rick, Tim Flahy niver forced a man against his will; so, if yez raaly mean it? Yez won't? Well, then—" the rest of the remark was lost in the gurgling of the bottle which he raised to his lips.

When his thirst was temporarily quenched, Flahy set the bottle down, smacked his lips contentedly, and drew the sleeve of his red flannel shirt across his mouth. "Whatever's come to yez, ould Parley-voo, that yez giv' the craythur the go-by?" he asked.

"I have promise Monsieur Valmont, upon ze honor of a Français, zat I drink no more, never."

"Well, bedad; I don't know but ye'r right in that same; for betune yerself, an' meself, an' the kay-hole, yez were comin' it a bit strong," Flahy returned confidentially; and then he took another draught himself. "Now," he resumed, after putting down the bottle, "let's cast a peep upon the writin'."

Croitier passed the paper across the table, and Flahy laboriously deciphered the address upon its back; "Mo-ise Dut-ro; twenty-seven Roo-ey Dum-on-t, Mo-nt!—what the devil's that?—Aw, yis,—Monthrayal!—that's the town," he said in a tone of great gravity. "Now we'll 'inquire widin,' as they say." He unfolded the paper and spread it out before him. After studying it for some time in that position, he turned it upside down, and tried again, running his hands through his bristling red hair. Presently he took it up, and held it out at arm's length, knitting his brows *in the intensity of thought.* This method prov-

ing no richer in results, he laid it once more upon the table, and began rubbing his chin, saying doubtfully, "Bedad, but it's a hard hand-write for readin'."

"Ah," began Croitier eagerly, "it is"—

But Flahy stopped him with hand uplifted in quiet dignity; "Don't interrupt me cogitations, sir; the divil fly away wid me, but I'll get it in a moment. It's a smart man as can floor Tim Flahy wid writin'."

Yet, despite his boast, Flahy could make nothing of the document, though he placed it in every position, and even tried to read it from the back, by holding it between his eyes and the candle.

"Troth, me boy, I'm beat intirely," he confessed, at last.

"I have attempt to explain zat it is not of Engliesh," Croitier answered; "but you have command ze silence."

"Ho—ho!" laughed Flahy, "yez may read it yerself, then; for divil a word of French do I know. I t'ought it were a queer kind of writin'. If ye'd give me anything else, I'd contrive to get the rights of it, but if it's French, yez can read it yerself." He shoved the paper across to Croitier.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders: "Ah, no, it is also not French; me, I can not read it, non plus!"

"What is it, then?" Flahy demanded.

"I know not," Croitier answered; "but Monsieur Valmont, he have write it, and explain zat zis monsieur, whose name you have read, he will



comprend ze letter and pay to me a thousan'-dollar."

Flahy thrust both hands into his pockets, leaned back on his stool, looked straight into his comrade's eyes, and gave vent to a long, low whistle. "And yez believed him!" he ejaculated.

"Mais oui—but yes; certainement," Croitier answered, uneasily.

Flahy's response was as nearly a sneer as it is possible for a good-natured Irishman to approach: "I wouldn't 'a t'ought yez 'ud be so green. Do yez want to know me idee?"

He supported his elbows upon the table, and leaned forward with his chin resting in his hands.

"Si—yes," was Croitier's low response.

"Well then, here it is." He emphasized his words with the extended forefinger of one hand. "I belave as that there Valmont fellow is triflin' wid ye."

"Si j'y croyais!" cried Croitier, springing to his feet with a terrible look in his eyes.

"Set down, Frenchy, an' don't be flyin' off the handle," commanded Flahy. Croitier sat down again, muttering still, "If I thought that!"

Flahy resumed: "Look at it yerself! Say he coaxes yez to leave the country an' go to Canady; what more does he want? When ye'll git there yez kin whistle for the money to git back. Troth, I don't believe there be's a word"—taking up the letter and tapping it scornfully with his finger—"divil a word of writin' upon the intire sheet; barrin' what's upon the back."

"He would not dare!" Croitier ejaculated, breathlessly.

"Wouldn't he, now?" retorted Flahy contemptuously. "Wouldn't he? Well, me boy, yez kin find it out aisy, if he wouldn't: carry the sheet of squirrel tracks to Monthrayal, an' see if yez kin find yer frind what's-'is-name. Yez kin try it, if yez want; but Tim Flahy's not the lad to t'row up a good job, jist to go huntin' wild geoses wid any man; no sir!"

"Si j'y croyais!" was still Croitier's only response; but the words were hissed between his teeth, and his fingers clutched nervously the edge of the table.

The Irishman regarded his friend curiously for a short time; and then rising, he said:

"I must run out a bit, now, an' see after the ovens. Yez kin be thinkin' it over until I return."

When, after ten minutes' absence, he reëntered the cabin, he found Croitier walking back and forth, and talking energetically to himself in French.

"I were considerin'," said Flahy, as he entered, "what yez 'ud better do." But Croitier seemed not to hear him.

"Frenchy!" said Flahy. The other made no response. Flahy took the bottle from the table and held it up to the candle. "I t'ought the same!" he ejaculated. "Frenchy!" he called, in a louder tone; then, as he gained no answer he took the Frenchman by the arm. The man stop-

ped, and turned upon him such a look that Flahy started back. "The saints preserve us!" he ejaculated. "What's kim over ye, man?"

The Frenchman collected himself by an effort, and with a faint smile answered, "Ah, nothing! I did but reflect."

"Reflect!" Flahy echoed; "I should t'ink yez did! Well, an' what course are yez intendin' to purshue wid that Valmont felly? Yez'll see him again?"

"I will arrange," Croitier answered briefly.

"Mind ye," continued Flahy, laying his hand on the Frenchman's shoulder, "don't let him be givin' yez no more foolin' like yon"—contemptuously indicating with his thumb the paper on the table. "Stick till him till yez receive the money, or barrin' that, a bit of writin' that a Christian clark intill a decent bank kin read."

"I will arrange," said Croitier again; and then, as if anxious to change the subject, he added, "come, let us drink; I have grand thirst."

"Faith, I t'ought yer reform wouldn't last out the night! Awell, I'm not quarrelling wid yez for hatin' to jilt the craythur."

They drank far into the morning, Croitier especially seeming savage in his eagerness for debauch. In fact, he drank so deeply that Flahy was worried, and tried to check him; but the last drop of the Irishman's liquor had been drained, and his own bottle of brandy emptied, before Croitier threw himself upon a blanket on the floor, and slept heavily.

At six o'clock, Flahy, going out for his last round of inspection, met his partner, who had returned from the village to relieve him.

"Tim," grumbled the newcomer, "you've let number two burn through bad. I jest fixed the break; but it's done a sight o' damage."

"What did I tell yez!" retorted Flahy. "But no, yez never took no advice; now yez kin see the dirt were laid an too thin," with which bit of repartee he turned back to his cabin, and was soon snoring in his bunk.

It was dark when Croitier awoke and sat up, calling for Flahy. But the Irishman was on duty once more among the ovens, and heard neither the call nor the subsequent imprecations that his ill-humored friend showered upon him. In a moment Croitier recollected, and became suddenly silent. Instead of trying to attract Flahy's attention, his only thought now was to steal away unnoticed. So he groped his way cautiously to the corner where he had left his rifle, and after securing it, stole to the door and disappeared in the shadows of the forest.

The moon was up, and by its light he was able to pick his way rapidly toward the river road, which he reached within half an hour, and then pushed on toward Adairsville. His head ached, his throat burned, and he was in a dangerously bad humor. But he tramped doggedly onward, with the determination to force his way once more into Mr. Valmont's presence, reproach him with

attempted fraud, and by means of threats, extort the sum he wished, in cash.

Nor was his resentment directed against Mr. Valmont alone; for, regarding Huntingford as the author of all his present troubles, his anger, whatever its immediate cause, since the encounter in the mine always included that young man. With money in prospect, he had been willing to forego vengeance; but, disappointed in his expectations, his vindictiveness returned with increased power. His mind, therefore, was now occupied, not only with plans for bringing Valmont to terms, but also with schemes for revenge on Huntingford. He clutched his rifle savagely in his two hands, and hugged it to his breast, clenching his teeth and swearing by turns.

Presently he reached the more open part of the road, and though there was but little chance of meeting anyone at that time of the evening, he instinctively forsook the moon-lighted highway, and climbing the bank, plunged onward through the bushes that crown it. The branches beat his face, the brambles scratched his hands, and occasionally he stumbled over a root or a stone, swearing as he recovered his balance. The rapid walk and his hot wrath brought great beads of perspiration to his brow; and finally he stopped to regain his breath. He leaned against a tree, and letting the butt of his rifle fall to the ground, drew his sleeve across his dripping forehead.

Suddenly he started, and clutching up his rifle

again, peered intently down the white, shimmering road.

Faintly, and still some distance away, the sound of rapid hoof-beats broke the stillness. In his guilty mind he was always expecting pursuit, and now he leaped at once to the conclusion that the sheriff was upon his track. He stood motionless and watchful, well hidden by the shadow of the tree, while in the road every object was clear and distinct to his view.

The galloping horse drew nearer and nearer. He heard the sound of the hoofs, now muffled in the dust, and now ringing out sharply as the iron shoes struck against stones in the way, and presently the dark form of a mounted horseman swung into view around a bend in the road, several hundred yards distant. He raised the barrel of the rifle, steadying it in his hand against the tree-trunk, and bringing the weapon to his shoulder, waited. One—two—it may have been ten seconds, passed, while the horse and rider drew nearer and nearer. As the appearance of the horse became more distinct, an exultant scowl contracted the Frenchman's brow, and he hissed between his teeth: "*Scelerat! Vaurien! Coquin! Ton heure sonne!*" It was Huntingford's horse.

There was a flash, followed by a sharp crack that reverberated loudly among the hills, and before the echoes died away, Lucifer was galloping, riderless and mad with terror, far up toward the Indian Glen, while, motionless in the middle

of the white road, with eyes filmed and pulses stilled, lay a dark form that had been Valmont's—and Jacob Valmont was acquitted from the judgment of men.

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#### CHAPTER XXIV.

*“Pax Vobiscum!”*

Everlasting peace, the peace of God, that we can not yet understand; did he whose dead body lay in the highway understand it? Did the significance of it grow plain to Valmont as his life-blood ebbed away and settled into the dust? Let us hope and trust so; for to us also, whether our lives be good or evil, or like his, a mingling of both, a time is surely coming when we too shall know.

A master spirit had vanished, the body that had housed it, lay stiffening in the moonlight, with cold, serene face turned toward the stars.

Farther and farther sounded the gallop of the fleeing horse, more and more distant and indistinct grew the crackling among the bushes, betraying Croitier's flight. He had at last taken a human life, and knowing now the value of it, must find some refuge far from his accustomed haunts, and from the faces of his friends. Let him go. Man's justice is neither blind nor idle; but whether she overtake him or not, death will one day find him. Then, when his heart lies in

that icy hand, as his blood chills and freezes, he too shall learn whether peace or its opposite follows an unpeaceful life.

Valmont was not left long alone, for the shot had called out the people living in the nearest of the few farm houses scattered along the highway. As they stood in awe-struck silence, staring at the ghastly upturned face, Huntingford galloped up.

As soon as possible after learning of Valmont's departure, he had left Adairsville with the intention of intercepting the fugitive at Ironton, for it was supposed that Valmont was making for that place. As he rode up to the group, he saw over their heads the man he sought, and sprang from his horse.

"Valmont!" he called. There was no answer, the hand he lifted from the dust was cold.

"He is dead," said an old farmer at his elbow. "We were a-settin' in the kitchen, when we heerd a gun go off this way, and came to see what was the matter. We found him jest as you see him now. He was dead when we fust come; he aint stirred."

"It's cold-blooded murder," said one of the men, "and done with a rifle."

"And not for robbery, nuther," the old farmer added, pointing to Valmont's massive watch-chain glittering in the moonlight, and the satchel which lay undisturbed at his side. "It's 'Squire Valmont, of Adairsville, haint it?" addressing *Huntingford* directly.



"Yes," said the young man; "and we must take him home; but I suppose the Coroner ought to see him first."

"He has to, it's the law," said the old man.

Then Huntingford, learning that the official lived in a cottage near the river, hurried away; leaving the farmers to get a wagon and blankets, so that after the necessary investigation had been made, Valmont might at once be brought home.

Huntingford soon returned, accompanied by the coroner; and after ascertaining that the legal formalities would be brief, he hurried back to Adairsville to break the news of the murder.

He found things as he had left them; Valmont's house was open; there were lights in some of the rooms, and the doctor was still there, talking with the ladies in the parlor. They came out together, when the sound of the horse's hoofs was heard upon the gravel of the driveway, and Miss Waithe followed them, bringing a lamp.

"You are back sooner than I expected," said the Doctor, with surprise, and he looked at Huntingford searchingly, as the young man swung himself wearily from the saddle. "Did you find him?"

"Yes, we found him. But I must speak to you alone. You will best know how to tell them." And quickly securing the horse, he took the mystified Doctor by the arm, and led him to one side.

Over the three women left together, fell a silence full of vague terror. They stood staring

vacantly at one another, and listening to the beating of their hearts.

"Peace be with you," said a low, sweet voice, near at hand.

The three women started. The lamp trembled and flickered in Miss Waithe's hand. Looking around they saw a grey-bearded stranger, standing at the foot of the steps, and looking up at them. The light dimly showed a benevolent face, and deep-set, honest eyes.

"I wish to see Mr. Valmont," said the stranger,

"He is not at home," Judith found voice to answer.

"Not at home," the three women heard him repeat as he turned away. But they did not see the happy look that came into the old man's face. It was Malachi, the patriarch; and he was glad that his pupil had at last followed his advice, and was gone.

But the sound of men's footsteps caught his ear at that moment, and he turned again. "Do you expect him to return soon, or has he gone on a long journey?"

Huntingford and the Doctor joined the group. "He has gone on a very, very long journey," the latter answered.

Huntingford saw the women start at the Doctor's words, and fix their anxious eyes upon him, while Miss Waithe lifted the lamp, as if the darkness had suddenly grown more dense about her.

"I do not understand you," said the old man, hesitatingly. "You mean more than you say."

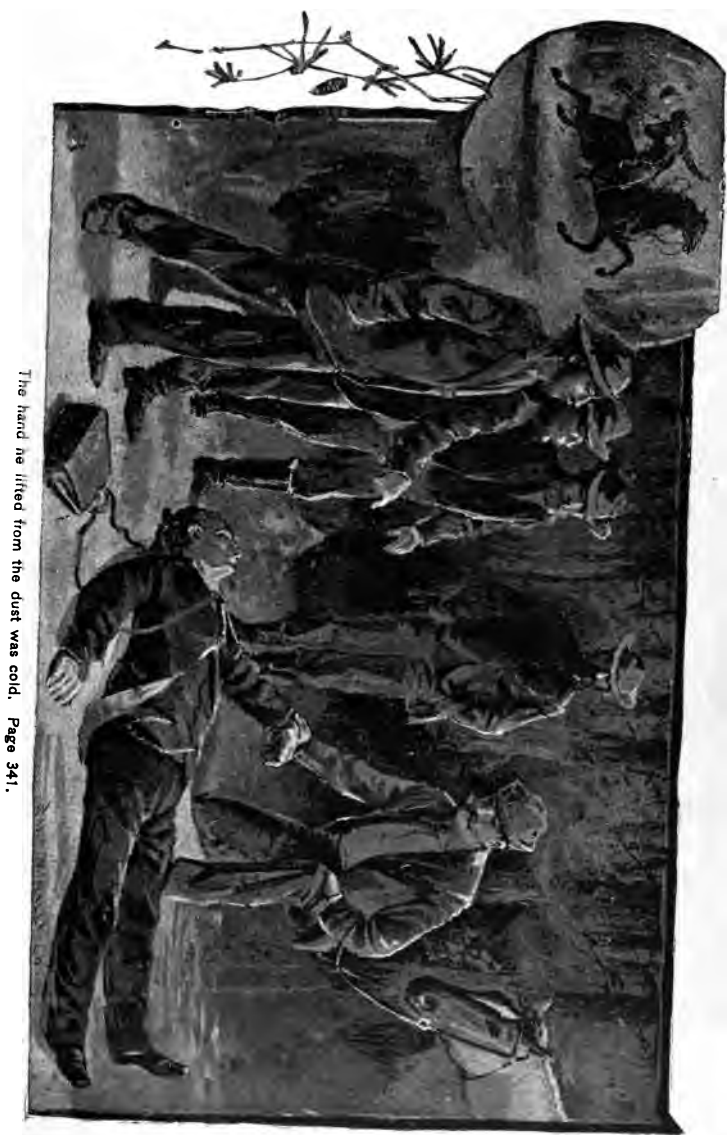
"It is a bitter story," said the Doctor; then, turning toward the women: "I would spare you if I could; but it must be told; are you quite strong enough to hear it now?" and he looked at his god-child, as if the question was meant especially for her. She answered him with a look so full of anxious suspense, that out of kindness he began at once: "Mr. Valmont," he said, turning to the old man, and speaking slowly, "left home perhaps two hours ago. Some farmers found him lying in the road, four or five miles away, and they are bringing him home."

"Dead?" asked the old man, in a lushed, trembling voice.

But the Doctor did not answer. He saw that May was on the point of falling and extended his arms to catch her; but Huntingford had anticipated him, and was already by her side. "Courage, May, courage!" the Doctor said, laying his hand soothingly on the girl's shoulder. And then encouraging, directing, and guiding, he urged the women into the house.

When he came out again he found that the stranger had not gone. The old man was sitting on the steps, his head bent forward and resting on his hands clasped over the handle of his cane. It did not appear as if he had heard the Doctor's step; for he did not look up, and as the Doctor regarded him he seemed to be sobbing.

The Doctor went down the steps, and placing a hand under the old man's arm, said: "Come, my friend; come up and rest. This sad affair upsets



The hand he lifted from the dust was cold. Page 341.



us all." Old Malachi yielded without a word, and, assisted by the Doctor, mounted the steps. His knees shook under him; he had barely strength enough left to reach a chair.

"Was Mr. Valmont related to you?" the Doctor asked.

The old man lifted his head, and the Doctor saw tears in his eyes, as he murmured brokenly, "He was the hope of my old age." His head sank again; and the physician not wishing to intrude upon the old man's grief, reëntered the house and busied himself in helping forward the necessary preparations for receiving the dead.

At last the wagon drew up to the door, and after a moment, with much harsh shuffling of feet on the boards of the veranda and a few low-spoken words of direction, they bore him in past the group of sobbing women to a hastily prepared couch in the parlor. He was wrapped in a blanket; so that May and the others were not shocked with the sight of blood, when, standing beside him, they gazed through their tears on his pale, serene face.

The old Rabbi had followed them into the house, and when the others turned weeping away, they left him alone beside the dead man. He dropped on his knees, and stretching his arms across the body, bowed his head until it rested on Valmont's breast.

He is praying, the others thought; and they also prayed that the soul of the departed might find forgiveness and peace.

But the stranger remained motionless and silent so long that the Doctor became anxious, and going to him, touched him upon the shoulder. As the old man rose slowly to his feet, the Doctor heard him murmur, "Thou wilt perform the mercy to Abraham which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."

He took a long look at the tranquil face of the dead, and with a heart-broken sob turned away. At the door he paused, and facing around, said in a low, sad voice, "Peace be upon this house, and upon them that dwell in it, forever." The hand he had lifted to bless them fell again to his side, and he went away.

The visit of the Rabbi was not without a beneficent effect, although he did not suspect it. Miss Larned, Judith, Miss Waithe, even Mr. Huntingford, had been so much absorbed in thinking of the terrible event that had not only silenced Valmont forever, but must inevitably influence their own plans and future, that they did not remark, except in the most casual way, the advent of the stranger and his peculiar demeanor. To the Doctor, however, the visit of the old man was an incident of no slight importance. It seemed to suggest that there were unsuspected traits in the character of the man whom he had come to mistrust; an unknown, hidden nature, not without goodness and grandeur, that lifted the murdered man above his fellows. For the old Rabbi's countenance was too noble, too good, to cover baseness, and his evident affection for the

dead man, presupposed worthiness in its object. It was long afterward, and when events themselves added weight and justification to his words, that he spoke of Valmont as a man of great, and, in some senses, sterling character.

As for Malachi, he went away, and the people he met by Valmont's deathbed saw him no more. The one great anguish had been spared him; he could not deliver the packet he had come to place in Valmont's living hand; it remained in his bosom, null and harmless. Even in the midst of his grief he realized, also, that, shockingly sudden as the tragedy was, Jehovah had yet been kind; and peace went with him, for his was a righteous soul.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Wanato Mines had a new manager. Immediately after the news of Mr. Valmont's death reached New York, a meeting of the Board of Directors was called, and, on the advice of Mr. Wells, Huntingford was chosen to fill the vacant position; on which account he became a permanent resident of Adairsville. During the first month of his management he was busy in clearing up the accounts of the concern and in instituting reforms. Work was peremptorily stopped in the North Gallery, and the more profitable vein being worked, it was not long before the monthly balance-sheets regained their former prosperous aspect.

Meanwhile, the young man, seconded by the Doctor and Judith, urged May to consent to an



early marriage; but it was not until the following spring that the "Wanato Plaindealer and Patriot" was gratified to inform its numerous readers in county and State, under deep headlines, the first of which invited all to

"Hear the Mellow Wedding Bells,"

that "our distinguished and talented fellow-townsmen, the popular manager of the celebrated Wanato Mining Company, last evening joined the noble army of Benedicts, being united in the golden bonds of matrimony to our fair and lovely young townswoman, Miss May Wayne Larned, who is well known to be opulent in the goods of this world as she is beautiful and accomplished. The ceremony," it continued, "was solemnized by that revered divine, the Rev. J. J. Brilling, D. D., in the Episcopal church, which had been appropriately decorated by fair admirers and well-wishers of the happy couple. We noticed among the multitudinous company assembled to wish the fortunate pair God-speed upon their future journey, hand in hand, through life, many prominent residents of the town and the State, including His Excellency, the recently inaugurated Governor; that eminent light of the noble profession of medicine, Francis G. Wayne, M. D., with his rising and successful colleague, Richard B. Fink, and lady, and that distinguished ornament of the modern forum, Charles Buchanan, Esq. Several invited guests were also present from the Nation's metropolis; among them being Mr. A. F. Wells, the

talented financier and president of the Wells-Larned Company, whose large interest in the Wanato Mines make its members almost fellow-townsmen with us. Besides this gentleman, our reporter noticed several representatives of metropolitan beauty and fashion, friends of the bride and groom, not wholly unknown to our citizens, as they have honored Adairsville and vicinity with their presence during the summer months for several seasons past; need we say that we allude to the charming Misses Smith, Fanton, Weatherbee, and Alma, and the handsome Mrs. Van Dank? Miss Smith and Miss Weatherbee made a pair of lovely bridesmaids, and Doctor Wayne played to perfection the responsible and difficult rôle of parent in giving away the blushing bride."

More followed in the same strain, including elaborate descriptions of the toilettes, and a glowing account of the wedding dinner. But all of us have read similar articles, and it is needless to enter into the details of village journalism. It is enough for us to know that May and our honest friend Huntingford have at last found peace as deep, as pure, and as true as love can make it; that they inhabit the old Valmont mansion, and that they are honored, respected, and beloved by all their acquaintances. A tiny Ernest, safely perched in his mother's arms, now crows his wordless welcome to his father, returning every evening from the Wanato Mines, and, quite impartially, he greets, also, the white-haired Doc

tor, who is a constant companion and counsellor of the happy couple.

The old man himself asks nothing more of life; his mission is accomplished, and he looks tranquilly, hopefully, almost eagerly, forward to the deeper, sweeter, fuller peace awaiting him, now near at hand. Meanwhile, such peace as can be to mortal man, rests on his soul. It is a pleasing sight to see the kindly old sage holding the wonderful baby in his arms, and pondering wistfully over the untried future of that budding life. Peace be to thee, oh, gentle, noble soul, whose steadfastness in love, whose singleness of heart, whose simplicity and strength of character, raise thee above thy kind, whom thou lovest so well!

The Valmont house is the same, yet not the same, as when we first knew it; but the change is a happy one. The dark, severe presence that ruled it so long, is gone forever. He sleeps, an unsuspected Jew, in Christian ground, and with him sleeps the secret of his life, and the village urchins, as they pass by the church-yard, point to the monument under which he rests, and, in hushed voices, tell to one another the story of the crime that has never been punished.

Peace be to him! His former neighbors, who knew him so well and yet so imperfectly, remember him with kindly feelings only. His reticence and coldness are alike forgotten. May's resentment against him can scarcely be said to have existed, and as her interests were found not irreparably injured, her

husband tacitly sanctions her retaining, with a true woman's independence of logic, her faith in the good intentions of the dead, and her respect for his memory.

Judith, too, learning the truth of his last assurance, that he was taking nothing with him but what belonged to him, keeps her secret concerning the details of that last terrible interview; nor will any one besides the Doctor ever learn from her lips the sad story of her life. May trusts her without demanding to know her secret. It is enough that Judith has proved her devotion, and that the Doctor, who knows her history, respects and honors her, and there will never be a day when Judith will not find a warm and loving welcome awaiting her at Huntingford's fireside; indeed, she looks forward to many quiet days in Adairsville, when succeeding summers shall bring brief weeks of freedom from the wearying routine of her profession. Here peace awaits her, also, and tranquility, such as hitherto her troubled life has never known; such peace as will come in the providence of God, sooner or later, to all that suffer in patience—to all that are honest, true, and brave.

\* \* \* \* \*

Miss Waithe has abdicated, and her domain acknowledges a new ruler. But let it not be imagined that Jerusha has been deposed. Her retirement was of her own election.

After the scene beside "Sar' Ann Fletcher's" grave, on that memorable Sunday, the intimacy

between Miss Waithe and Hezekiah steadily prospered; and never again could the lady tax her admirer with neglect; for, did it rain or did it shine, Sunday always brought him to her side.

As time passed, his visits grew more frequent, and it was surprising how often he found some urgent errand requiring his presence in the village. This fact, considered by itself, might not warrant hasty conclusions; but the care with which he always attired himself to fetch a pound of sugar or a jug of molasses, and the certainty with which such trips included a call upon Miss Waithe, must be regarded as confirmatory to the suspicions of the village gossips. What these suspicions were it boots us not to inquire. Jerusha, when she casually heard of them, sniffed in disdain, as if they were beneath active notice; and we must regard her opinion as authoritative upon the subject.

But, blink the fact who will, when a man suddenly discovers multiplied reasons for betaking himself frequently and persistently into the vicinity of a particular lady, when his habits in dress undergo a marked and radical change, and when he is never at ease out of the lady's presence, and still less at ease in it, something serious is brewing; and cautious people may reasonably suppose that a certain "sweet little cherub who sits up aloft" is managing affairs, and that—fate forbearing to interfere—he will have them up before the clergyman before they know it.

Between Miss Waithe and Mr. Hopkins matters remained in the uncertain state we have described, until about a year after Mr. Valmont's death, when one Sunday evening Hezekiah called rather earlier than usual, and, the verandas being filled with company, suggested to his companion that they should take a walk. The maiden consented; but, lest the reader, in the light of later occurrences, should suspect her of duplicity, we hasten to avouch, boldly and heartily, her perfect innocence.

Hezekiah's manner was nervous, and his words, when he spoke, betrayed abstraction. The walk brought the couple presently to the church-yard gate, and Jerusha proposed that they should go in and visit Mr. Valmont's grave. Hezekiah absent-mindedly assented; and entering, they made their way to the enclosure where the newly erected shaft of marble marked the resting-place of Jacob Valmont. It glistened in the moonlight white and cold, and around its base the earth showed through the flowers Miss Waithe and May had planted there.

Jerusha was the first to break the silence. "There," she said with a sigh, "there he lays. On'y a short spell back he was a strong, smart man; smarter an' stronger'n any man I ever knowed, or am likely to know agin, if I live to be as old as Mathusalem. I come here often between times, an' whenever I come I keep bein' reminded of the sayin' of the Good Book,—'All is vanity an' vexation of sperrit;' an' I keep goin' over an

over in my head, the words of the hymn—which never was truer words spoke:

‘Heark from the tombs a doleful sound;  
Mine ears attend the cry:  
Ye mortal men, come view the ground  
Where you mus’ shortly lie.’ ”

Jerusha brushed her hand across her eyes, when she concluded; and Hezekiah stood for some moments without making any response. Finally, he cleared his throat, and turning abruptly toward his companion, asked, with seeming irrelevance, “Rushy, d’ye mind the time, one Sunday a’ternoon, when we come in here together from meetin’, and had that talk over yander by Sar’ Ann Fletcher’s grave?”

Jerusha’s heart leaped frantically into her throat, and only by an effort could she answer, “Yes, I remember.”

“Wall,” Hezekiah continued, with a quiver of mingled nervousness and earnestness in his voice; “sence that day, I’ve done a sight o’ thinkin’,—seems to me I aint done much else but think an’ worry ever sence, an’ now I can’t put it off no longer; its got to come—are ye listenin’, Rushy?” for the maiden’s face was averted. She nodded her head, unable to answer with speech.

“Wall, its this a-way: I can’t make out to git along no longer ’ithout ye, ’Rushy, I vow I can’t; will ye marry me! Thar, now, it’s out!” And with a sigh of relief, he drew his handkerchief across his brow.

Jerusha raised her eyes resolutely, to repel with

indignation this bold attack upon the stronghold of her heart; but before the manly gaze of her lover, they fluttered and fell. She made an agitated, nervous motion, as if to flee; but Hezekiah's hand was on her arm, and his voice pleaded: "Will ye, 'Rushy? Oh, won't ye?"

She raised her eyes again; stammered, choked, and then—

Well, what then? What happened then, dear readers, does not concern us; for the scene Love deigns to hallow with his sacred presence, is taboo to all but lovers, and they will not ask, "What then?"

As the pair strolled slowly homeward, they talked of the future; and Hezekiah insisted that their marriage should not be long delayed, "For," said he, conclusively, "we've waited a sight too long a'ready, my—" which, unspoken, diminutive Jerusha evaded with a shame faced, "Don't be redikilus, now, Hez!" Then she added yieldingly, "But what's goin' to become o' them two young people up at the big house? I declare to gracious I don't know; though its ben lonely enough for me up there, I kin tell ye."

"Oh, as for that," Hezekiah suggested with ready expediency, "they needn't be nowise unconvenienced nor put out by your leavin', cause sister Lize kin keep house for 'em. She's likely enough, too, havin' took keer o' me for dear knows how many year; and it ain't more'n right 't she should take your place, seein's you're goin' to take hern."

- - -



Jerusha answered, "You go 'long!" but thus it was settled; and in due time Jerusha Waite became Mrs. Hezekiah Hopkins.

In the domain of the tender passion, the improbable is probable; for Cupid is a capricious divinity, shooting, with blinded eyes, his random shafts wherever the children of Eve do congregate. O childish god! though weakest, yet art thou greatest; for only thou darest set at naught and laugh to scorn the wisdom of philosophy and the laws of expediency; and thou passeth by the apt and tender heart, to mould like wax the heart of the adamant.

Jerusha's maidenhood, though scrupulously faithful, was in no sense lovely. Sentiment was left out of her composition; and in wifehood as in maidenhood, her ruling motive will be duty. She will never learn to bear with patience the mud upon her husband's boots; but he is biddable, and will, without a murmur, leave them in the hall. She will never learn to appreciate the beauty of any ornament that entails extra work, and the flowers in her garden will never grace her parlor. But her home will not be without adornment, for solid vases brought from far New York, already stand upon the parlor shelf, and curious artificial flowers of perennial bloom and undeciduous foliage are blushing in them; upon the what-not, in one corner, are arranged bright colored shells of convoluted shapes, bits of branching coral, odd minerals, and dried star fish—the *treasurings* of many patient years; while, crowning

it, in all the beauty of nature's handiwork, stands a glass shade, protecting from dust and the gnawing tooth of time a plate of fruit, done in wax by a long dead friend.

If there is in a woman any dormant tenderness, any unsprouted germ of generosity, the relation of marriage will bring it out. It may be, therefore, that the helplessness of an infant appealing to the womanly instincts of her nature, will develop in Jerusha a gentler heart; for we trust that she, also, will be blessed with this greatest of heaven's gifts. Moreover, she is now under the Doctor's direct tutelage, and though it is not in her to become as kindly and sunny-tempered as Mrs. Fink, no one has ever come within the sphere of that gentle, manly influence, without being tempered by it.

She has not forgotten Mr. Valmont, and long after his name has passed from other lips, she will treasure his memory as that of a great man. But she is happy in her new position, and is full of song from dawn till dark; for she, also, after her own manner, has found peace; and as she reviews the evidences of her prosperity—the phenomenal productiveness of cows and poultry, and the surprising fertility of her kitchen garden,—she often murmurs, in a spirit of contented thankfulness, “It do beat all! It do beat all!”

\* \* \* \* \*

## EPILOGUE.

*OPTATAM CURSU CONTIGUIMUS METAM.*

Jacob Valmont's life, though it had been full of earnestness, self-sacrifice, and patient devotion, was a failure; and so must be the life of every one that from his schemes for the succor of humanity omits men. It is possible to do evil with the intention that good shall result from it; but the desired result will not come. To the early Jesuits, their enemies imputed the doctrine that the end justifies the means; but, whether they held it or not, it is false; the end proves the means. If the tree be evil, the fruit is evil; figs will not grow on thistles, nor grapes on thorns; and as the great Saadi has said, "the whelp of a wolf will become a wolf, though he grow up among men." But, alas, Jacob Valmont's mistake is a common one; for do we not all, at times, in little things or great ones, make the same futile effort to justify bad means by good motives? The human family is so closely bound together—so organically connected, that an injury to one, though he be a stranger, is an ultimate injury to all. Neither Jacob Valmont nor Rameses; neither thou nor I, oh, brother man that readest these

pages, can secure benefit to any one at the expense of another. The keynote of all progress and all amelioration is now, as it always has been—charity; and if any one will but glance over the pages of history he may read in every failure recorded there this divine truth: "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." This is not a newly discovered truth; it is so old, and has been so thoroughly proved by the experience of countless generations, that we are born with an instinctive knowledge of it—a knowledge that we must unlearn or forget before we are able to doubt it.

Valmont, also, had known this truth; but he set himself early to unlearn it, and succeeded. Year after year he saw his power for good growing, but did not use it. His brothers suffered around him, and from many lands came to him the sound of sighs that he could have hushed; but, concerned only with the future, he had neither heart nor hand for the present. "It is expedient," he thought; and with the indifferent cruelty of many another generous dreamer, he sealed his eyes and ears with this argument.

But is the cause of those for whom he labored hopeless? We trust in the goodness of God; and if our trust is not vain, the Jew shall rise from the dust. But he shall not rise alone. The instruments of modern civilization—the humanizing agencies of the railway, the telegraph, and the press, have made it impossible for one people to rise without lifting up all others with it.

Infinite wisdom only can foresee the future of our human race upon the earth; but we may feel sure that the Christian will not thrive at the expense of the Jew, nor the Hebrew walk over the neck of the Gentile into his kingdom.

The Holy Order is not dead, and shall yet do a glorious work in many lands; but whenever it shall commit itself to the selfish policy of a Jacob Valmont, its work must fail; and it is only through the generous methods of such as Rabbi Malachi that it can hope for success. The beliefs of these two differ as widely as night and day. The one would sacrifice all men to the needs of those he would benefit, while the other would win through justice, patience, and truth. The one would work in the darkness, and the other in the light. In short, the one is pitiless, and the other, full of charity.

In the final result, names count for nothing, and whether a man have called himself Jew or Christian, he must have used the Christian method, or his work will prove a failure. And what is the Christian method if it be not the method of charity—of love? And what, again, is love, but a generosity, a magnanimity, divine in its breadth and loftiness? “If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, but have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, to remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow my goods

to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

“Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth.”

O, ye that believe in the ultimate triumph of right over wrong; ye that trust the words of Him that said, “Blessed are the meek”; ye that would work together with God for the uplifting of mankind—forget not that, though there are many means of grace, the greatest of them is love.

Reader, in running we have reached the desired goal, *optatam cursu contiguimus metam*; our book is written, “let us honor the great empire of *silence* once more!”

[THE END.]

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